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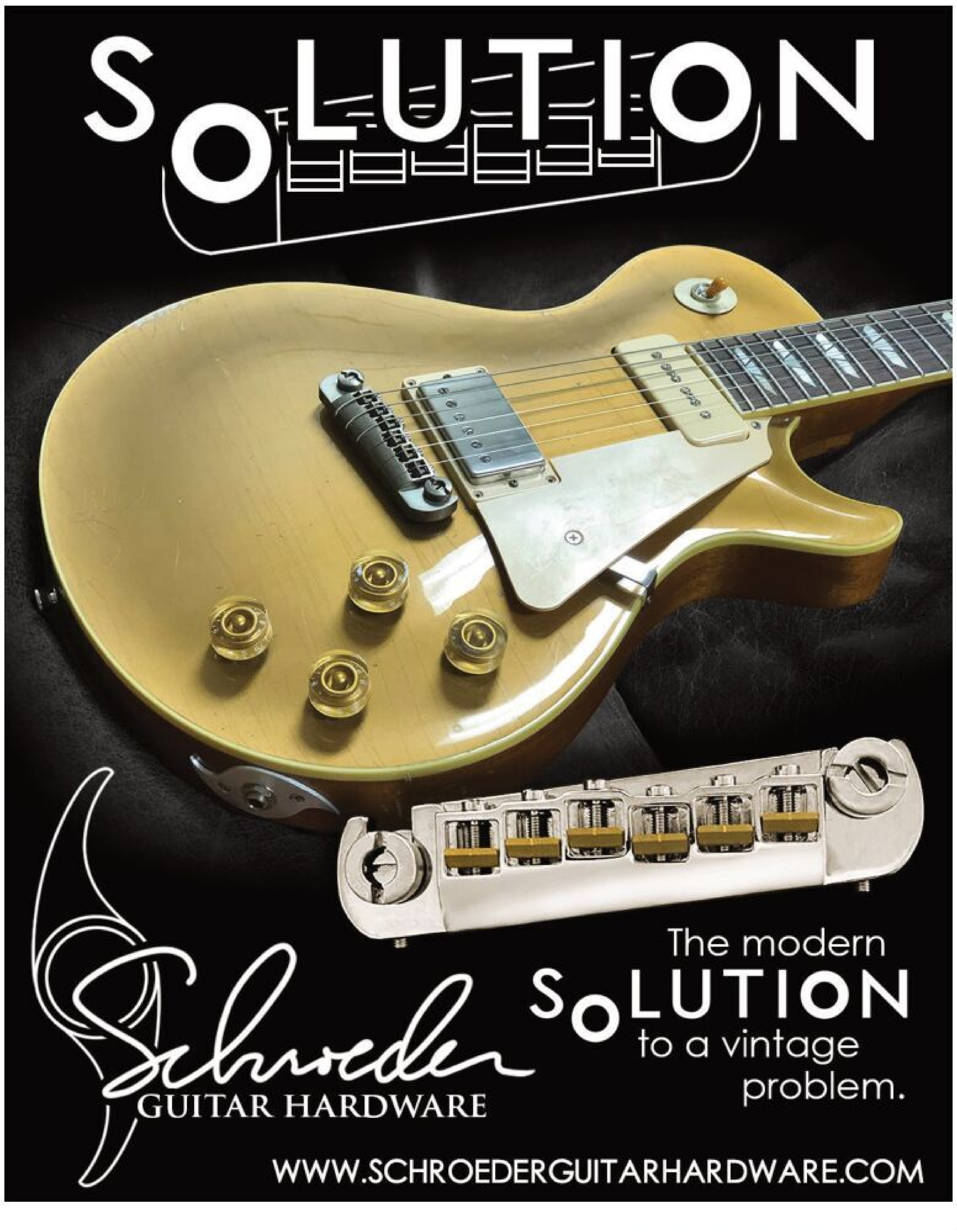
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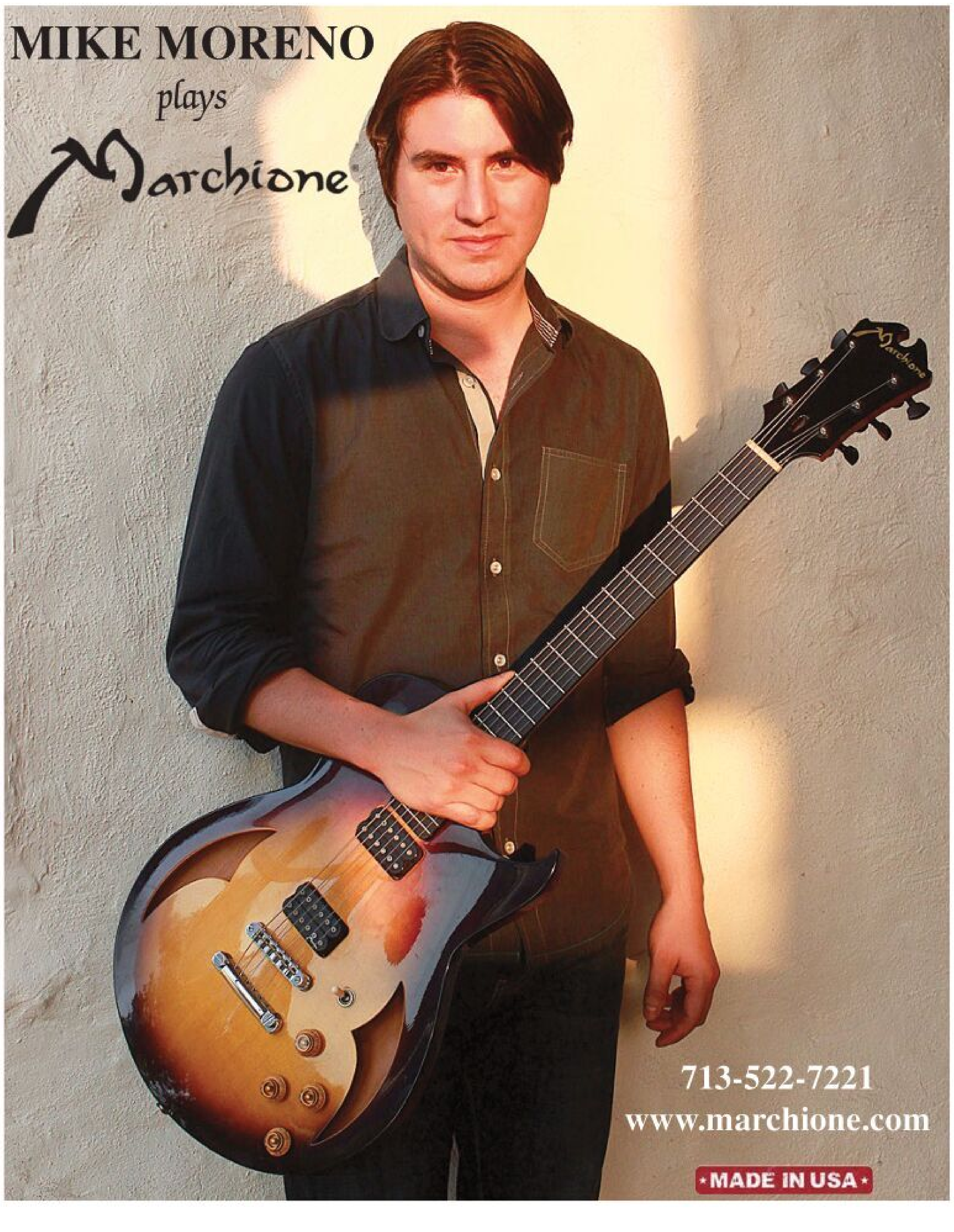
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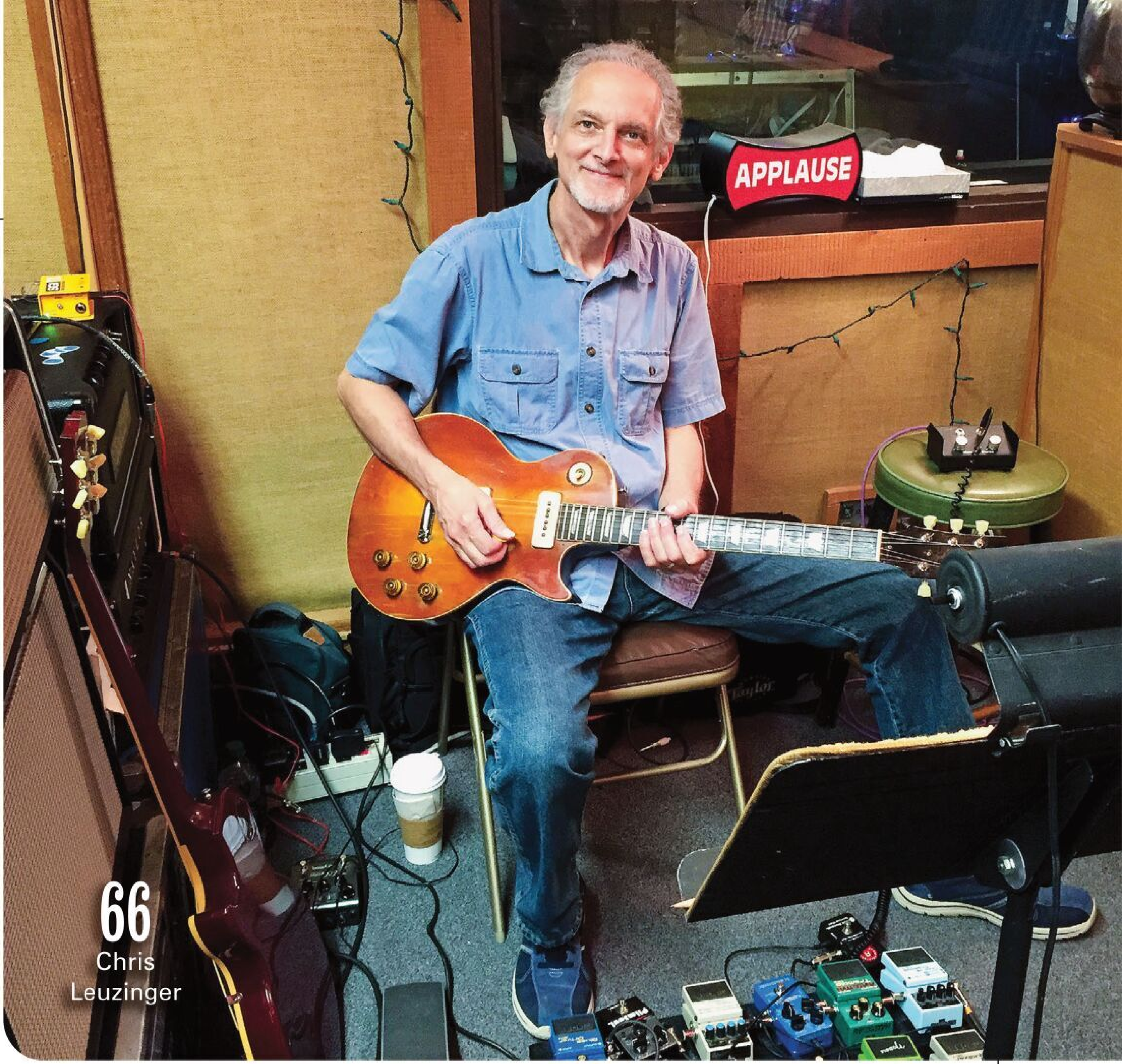

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| *By Bret Adams*

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Photos: COVER: Davey Johnstone: Hoo-Me/Storms Media/Alamy. Micki Free: Marie Gregorio-Oviedo. **THIS PAGE:** Keb' Mo': Ed Rode. Chris Leuzinger courtesy of C. Leuzinger.

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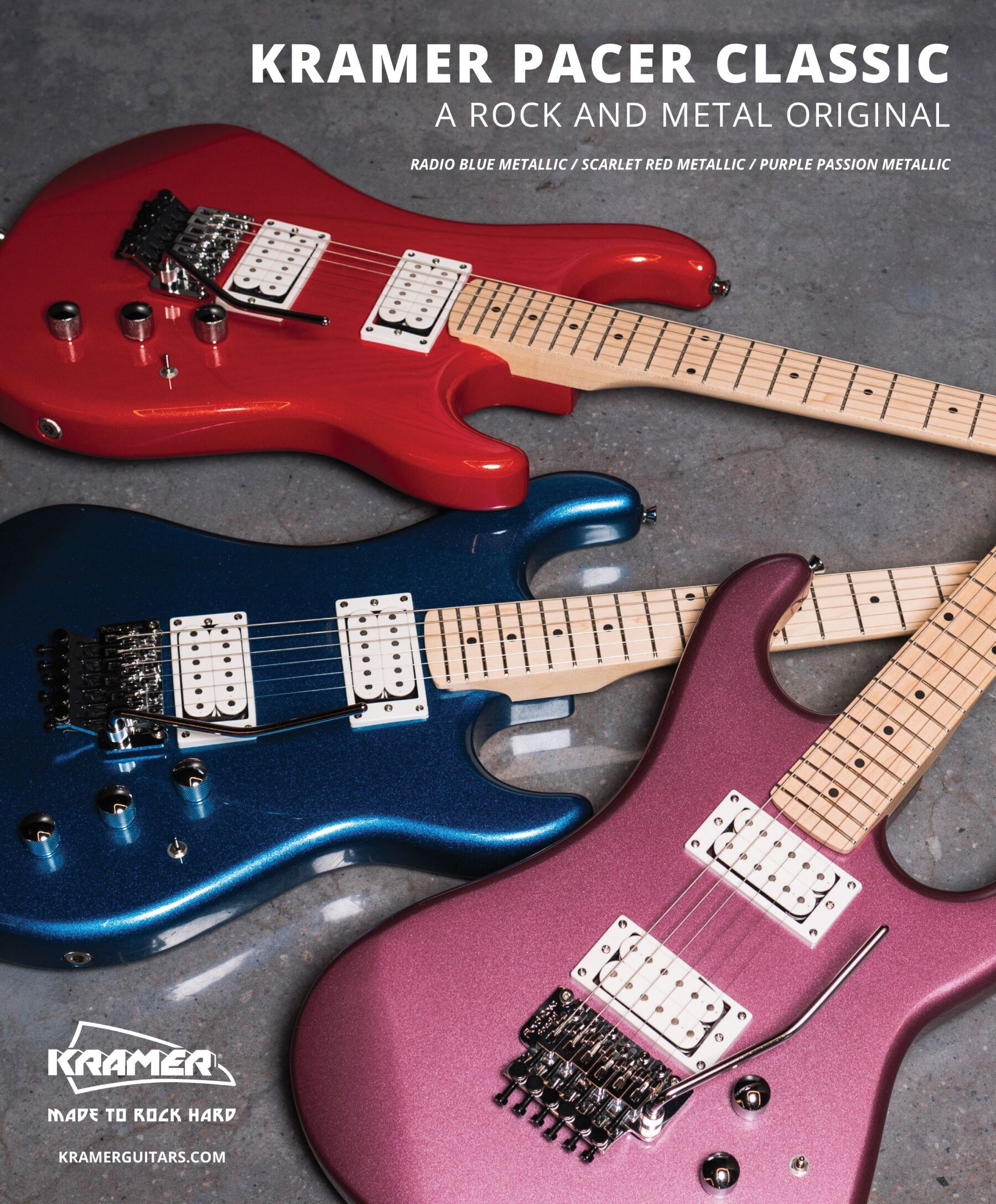
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READER MAIL

(UN)MASKED MAN

I look forward to every issue of *Vintage Guitar* and read it cover to cover. I subscribe to read opinions on music and musical equipment, and while reading Dan Forte's "Where's Eric" ("Check This Action," February '22), it was clear that Dan didn't like Eric Clapton as a person, but spoke highly of Clapton's music.

It's okay that Dan doesn't like Eric; I sometimes jokingly say, "If we all liked the same things, I wouldn't be special." And when Dan says, "I'm capable of separating the person from the art; I don't have to like one to appreciate the other," I believe it's a true statement, and he goes on to post some of Eric's personal and musical accomplishments. But then he crosses the line by saying, "I do, however, wish he'd wear a goddamn mask." Rather than separating his opinion of a person from their art, that was vitriol showcasing his anger over Eric's politics.

Political discourse has created great music over the years, as with Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger, CSN&Y, and so many others. Like them, Eric is an artist, and his fans will approve or disapprove using their dollars. *VG* is about vintage guitars, not the politics of those who play them. Last year's feature on how Covid was affecting the vintage market was great – and totally non-political, as the magazine *should* be.

Stuart Brink
Green Bay, Wisconsin

When the February issue arrived, I couldn't wait to read the interview with my old friend, Greg Martin. After reading the rest, though, I had to comment on Dan Forte's column.

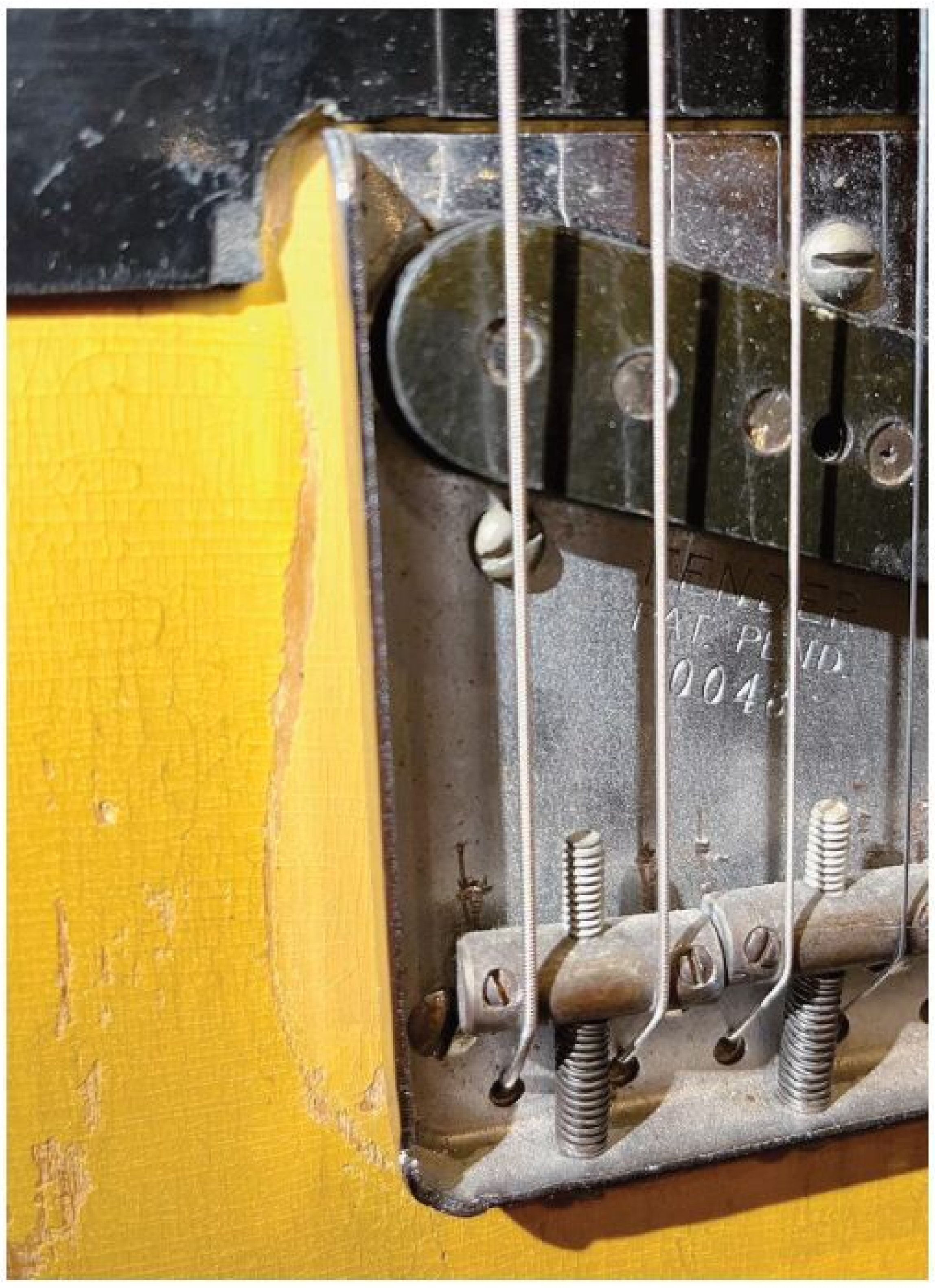
I wish *VG* would stop giving platform to artists and writers to parade their personal views and beliefs, and that *everyone* would just shut up and play their guitar. Leave social commentary for fanzines like *Rolling Stone*.

We all have opinions and views, but I don't need to hear what someone had for breakfast to learn about their music or gear. So, please keep *VG* focused on music and instruments. Oh, and Dan, maybe you should've worn a muzzle. Just sayin'.

Jimmy Scott
Fort Myers, Florida

I was taken aback and saddened with Dan Forte's review and off-the wall commentary on *The Lady In The Balcony*, a perfectly fine effort by Eric Clapton to entertain a broad group of diverse music lovers. For me, its mix of Clapton's playing and singing brought back many great memories. We play *The Lady* two or three times a week and even named a stake-winning mare "Layla," inspired by the acoustic version. From this point on, when I see Dan's name, I'll turn the page.

Tim Hartman
Edmond, Oklahoma



Vince Gill's Jabo Broadcaster bridge.

I've been a *VG* subscriber since 1991, and thought Dan Forte's review of *The Lady In The Balcony* hit the nail on the head. Clapton's influence has touched anyone who picked up a guitar and played blues, but his commercial success shouldn't be confused with his artistic high points. Thankfully, Dan doesn't cut him that slack. So-called music critics today rarely have the insight, musical knowledge, and grasp of history to give proper perspective of his career. And yes, he *should* put on a mask!

Ira Spin
Newark, New Jersey

(*Dan Forte's reply: "For 20 years,* VG *has offered me the freedom to do reviews, interviews, obituaries, and lend opinions via my column. For the record, I'm hardly anti-Clapton. In 46 years as a music journalist, I've never interviewed an artist I didn't respect, and Clapton has personally given me opportunities others weren't granted. Regarding the mask controversy, he brought that on himself, in a very public way. As for keeping focused on music, would I write about Dylan or Baez without mentioning protest songs, or not bring up drugs when someone covers "Cocaine"? By Clapton's own admission, he's an open book. There's a lot more to him than just notes on a fretboard."*)

(ONE) READER'S CHOICE

I love *VG* and *had* to vote in the Readers' Choice Awards (February '22) because I named my son after Nathan Daniel, a genius who did as much as anyone to help fuel the guitar's popularity and accessibility. In 1961, I bought my Silvertone U-1 for $15, and still have it. And I voted for the ES-330 – my first "good" guitar; if you have to play so loud it feeds back, you're playing with the wrong cats!

Freddy McLain
Corpus Christi, Texas

JABO MOD?

Thank you for keeping print media alive for us old fans of actual, beautiful photos of actual, beautiful guitars... which leads me to the nice January cover and clear evidence that Jabo Arrington's Broadcaster once wore a different bridge plate. It's not mentioned in the feature, but might alter the history of the guitar. Can you shed light on what I think I'm seeing?

Mark deLeon
El Prado, New Mexico

(*Ed. Note: Vince Gill's camp confirmed that, to their knowledge, the bridge hasn't been replaced, and they sent the photo above showing marks created by the "ashtray" pickup/bridge cover. If Jabo played with it in place, his hand would've rested or at times pressed against it. If stored that way, anything pushing on the case – i.e. other guitar(s) stacked atop – could have also contributed.*)

GONE WEST

The January issue was terrific. I first read Dave Hunter's amazing feature on Dave West's amplifiers. Circa 1972, I (accidently) blew out my right ear while playing in front of a West stack, and have dealt with it (and the tinnitus) ever since. West amps were quality equipment that met a too-soon demise.

Richard Linwood
Franktown, Colorado

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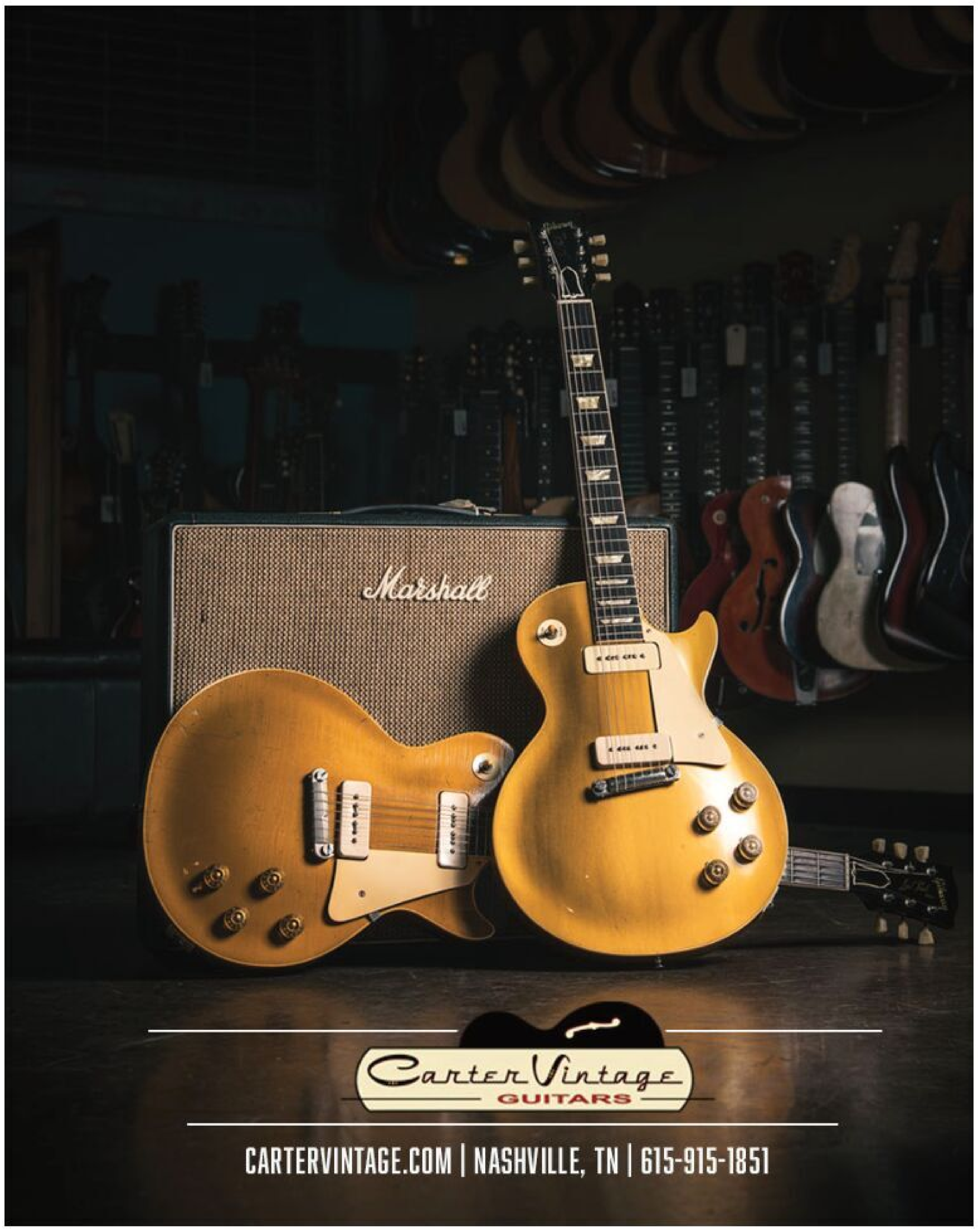

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HOWARD DUMBLE PASSES

As production closed for this issue, word arrived of the passing of legendary amp builder Howard Alexander Dumble.

An originator in the "boutique" market, Dumble began making amps in 1972, using a circuit with an initial gain stage and tone stack that borrowed from Fender's blackface amps, but employed a high-gain overdrive produced by running clean signal to a post-preamp gain stage.

Among his clients were Robben Ford, Carlos Santana, David Lindley, Larry Carlton, Eric Johnson, Stevie Ray Vaughan, John Mayer, Sonny Landreth, Joe Bonamassa, Todd Sharp, and Kenny Wayne Shepherd.

Look for a memorial next month.

NGM HONORS DI MEOLA

The National Guitar Museum (*VG*, December '21) has honored Al Di Meola with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

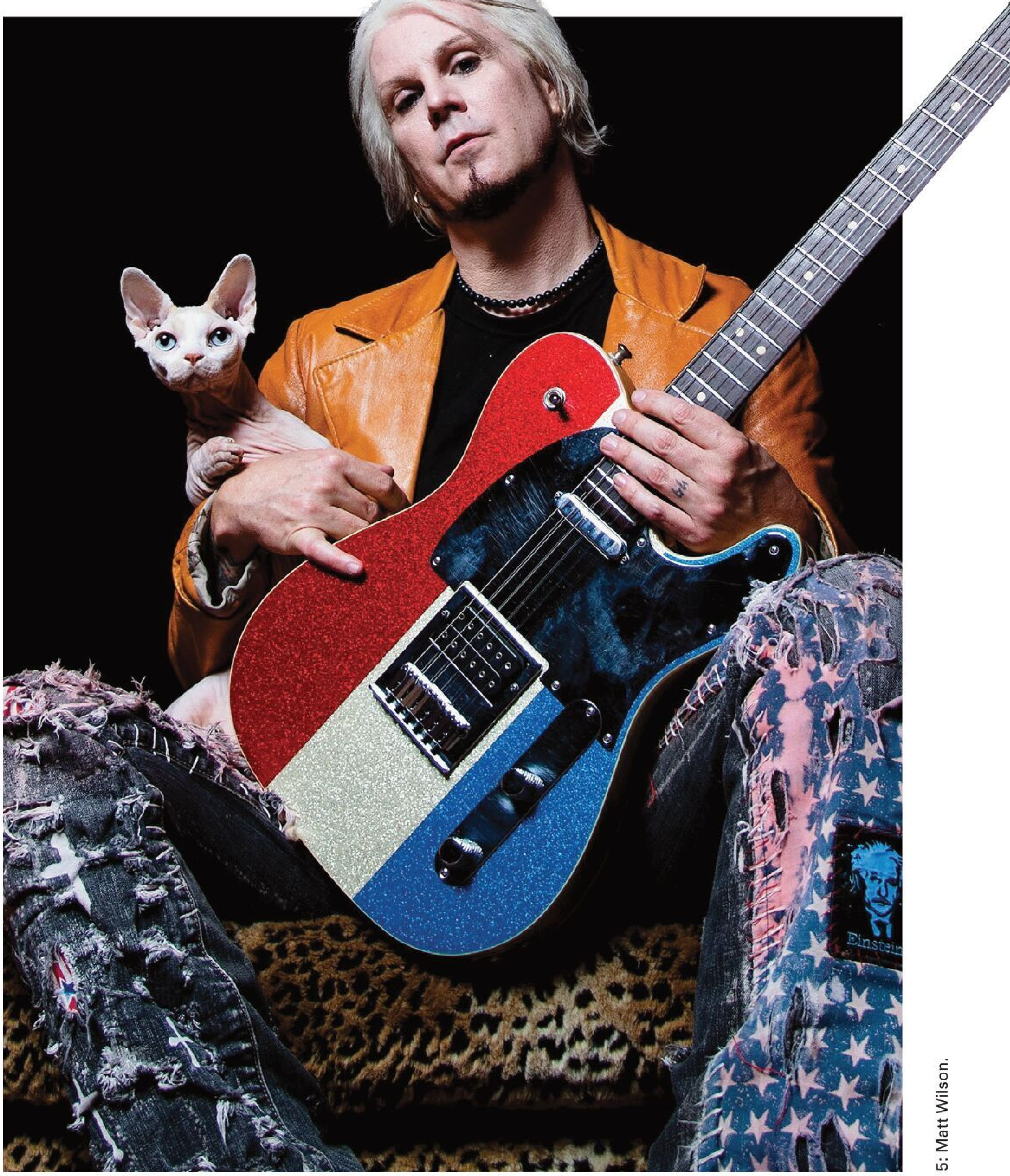
NGM director H.P. Newquist cited Di Meola's musicianship over four decades, playing in styles from jazz fusion and rock to world music and pop. "His incredible speed, skill, and picking style were new to the ears of guitarists and music lovers everywhere," Newquist said. "He is both an icon and an inspiration."

Di Meola is the 12th recipient of the award.

GIBSON ACQUIRES GWW

Gibson has acquired General Wood Workers (GWW), a long-standing supplier of cases for Gibson and other instrument companies. The two began working together in 2002.

"Our partnership has gone from strength to strength over the past few years, leading to Gibson becoming our largest customer by far," said Stephen Flynn, CEO of GWW. "We are excited to join the Gibson family to bring our expertise and ideas to the next level."



Howard Dumble: Orianthi via Facebook. John 5: Matt Wilson.

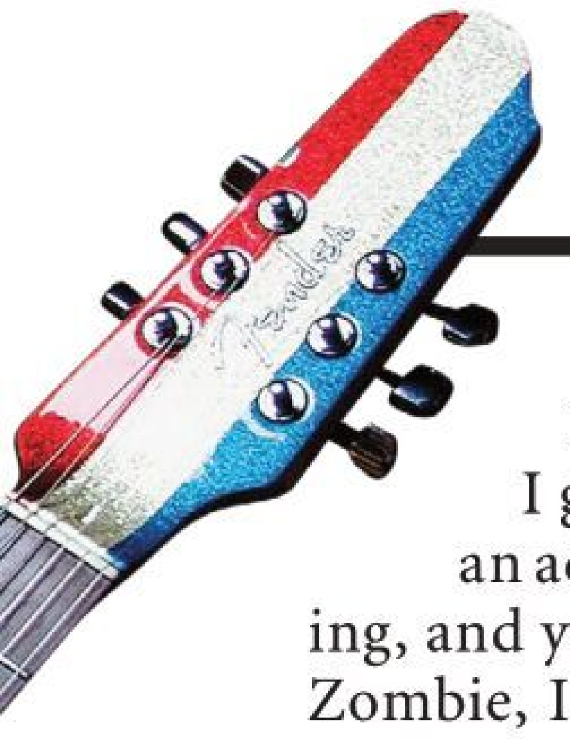
JOHN 5

In the Hands

On his latest album, John 5 stays true to himself as he dips into his famous bag of Tele tricks with mastery and humor. Mr 5 does it all, from shred metal to rockabilly, but what especially shines through is his love and unyielding devotion to the electric guitar. He invited excellent guests, but at the crux of *Sinner* is 100 percent wicked guitar music.

Are you the master of time management?

(laughs) I try to manage my time, for



sure. I'm very particular with it, but I love to practice; I practiced just a few minutes ago. It's a comfort to me. I got my first guitar at age seven, and now it's like being an adult with your Woobie (laughs). Everything is scheduling, and you have to communicate a lot. When I work with Rob Zombie, I know what he likes, and I know what he's after. The most important thing is that I listen to what he says, not what *I* might want to do. I'm not going to say, "Oh, I'll just play this!" I listen. That helps a lot.

What was your vision for *Sinner*?

Just to do the best of what I do. I love playing cool riffs and hooky songs, and I like playing crazy guitar on top of that. I also tried to do everything completely live. It was a challenge, but worked well. I was listening to '40s Junction on SiriusXM, and it's interesting because all those songs were done live back in the '40s. It's incredible to think that there were so many instruments and vocalists, and it was all done live. I practiced and practiced, then went to the studio and did it from take to take, beginning to end. So, it's a very honest record. I'm not trying to be someone I'm not. This is the exact same stuff I play when I'm sitting on the couch.

Most well-known guitarists have to stay in their lane. Your fans expect rockabilly, metal, country, and jazz on a John 5 record.

It's a pleasure. To me, it's like watching different kinds of movies. Sometimes you want drama, comedy; sometimes it's food – a documentary – same thing with clothes. You don't want to just do the same thing every day. It reflects how I am. It's a joy to be able to play different styles of music. "How High The Moon" which is just clean Tele, is one of my favorite tracks on the album.

Which guitars did you use?

Well, I did all this during the lockdown and when I called my storage unit, they said, "Sorry, you can't get in." So, I did the whole thing on two guitars – mainly Goldie, my signature Telecaster. It's on every record and every show. It's like when you date a bunch of girls, then find one and say, "I think I want to marry her." It's that way with this guitar.

What was the rest of your gear?

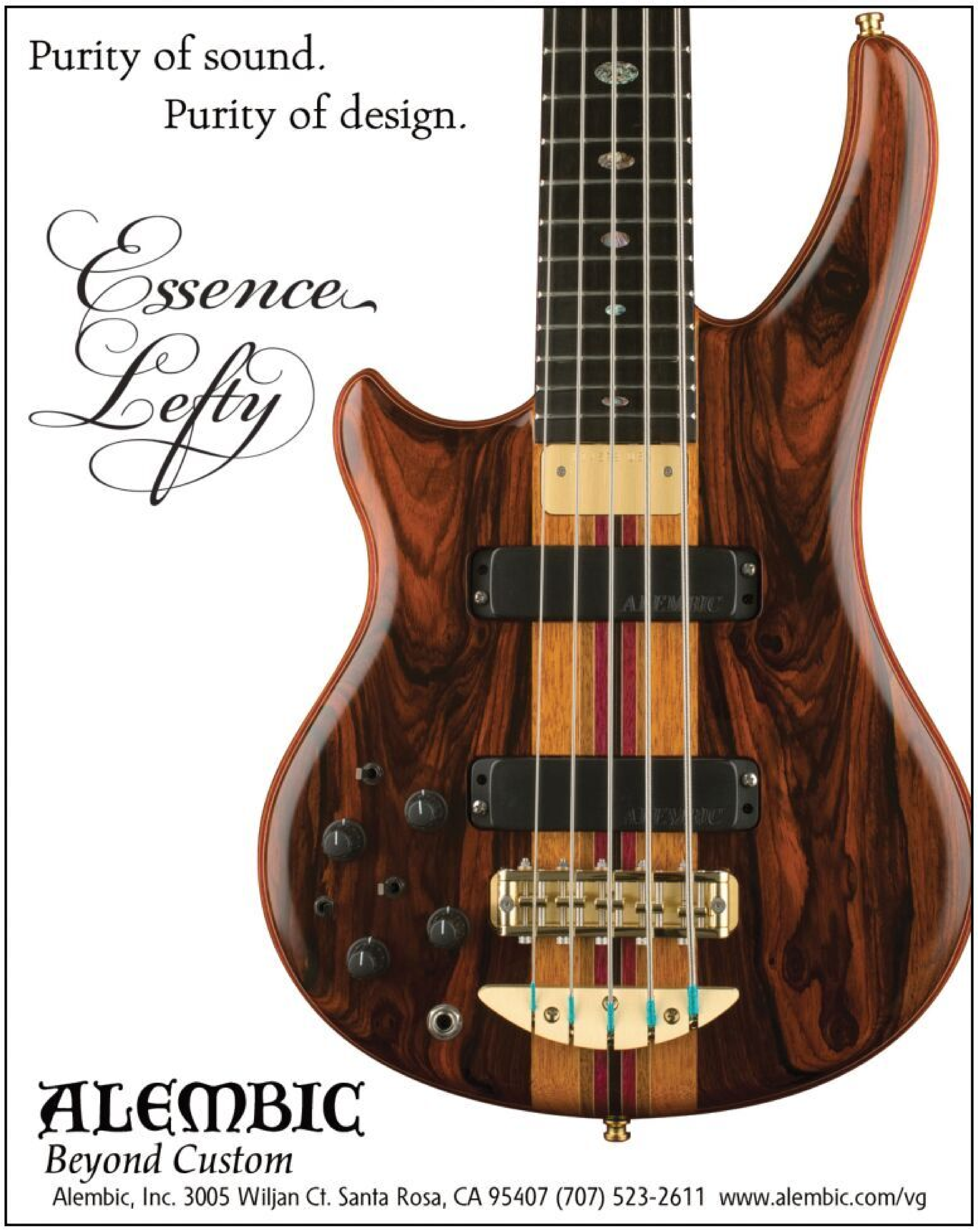
I have a Boss NS-2 Noise Suppressor, an SD-1 Super Overdrive, and a Marshall JVM 100-watt head. I use it clean and dirty. That's it. Tone comes from your hands, which is the classic Eddie Van Halen thing. Eddie Van Halen sounds like Eddie Van Halen on acoustic guitar. I've played through his rig, and it sounds like me playing through his rig. Eddie had an aggressive touch – I have a very light and graceful touch.

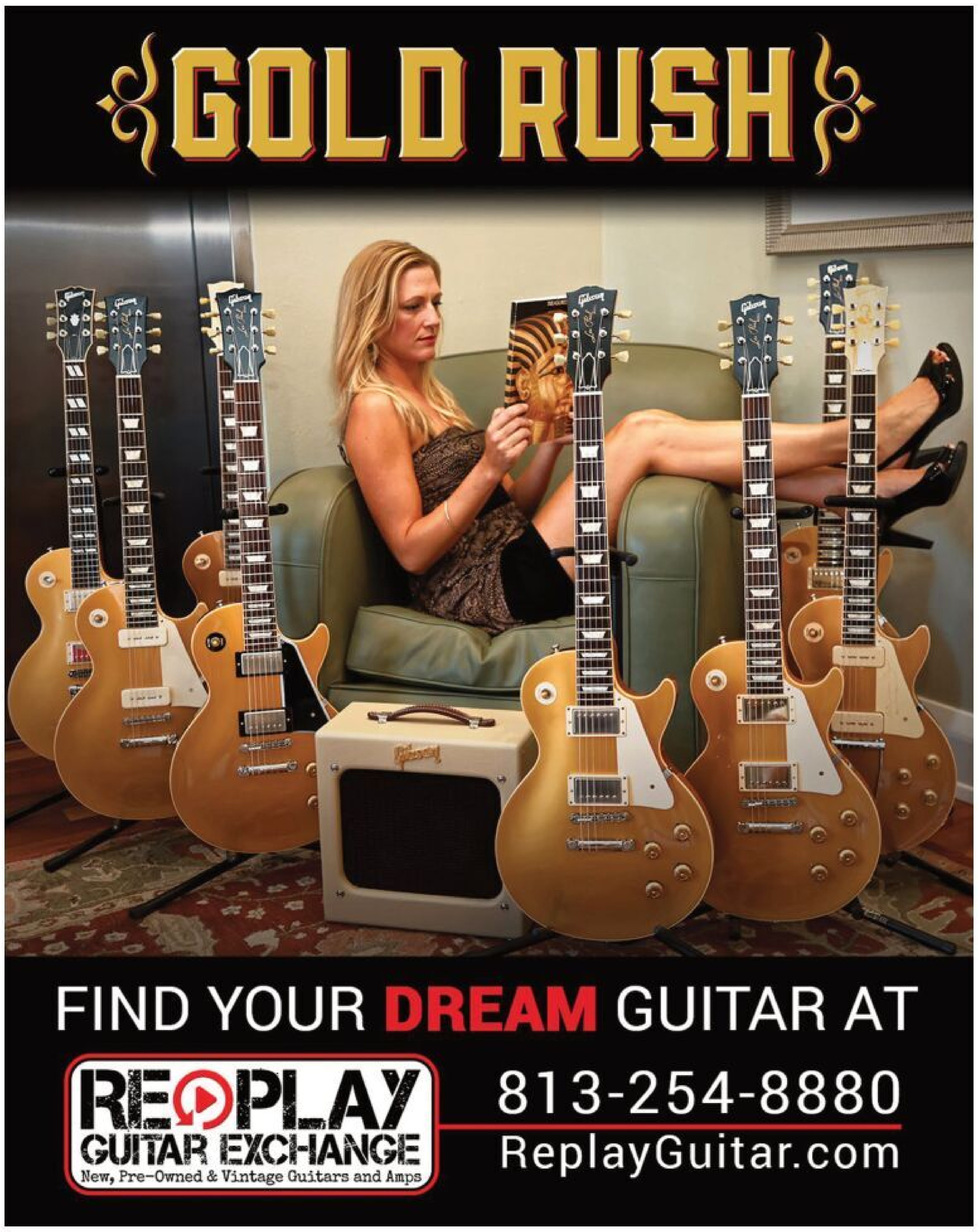
That's a nifty slapping technique on "This Is How I Do It."

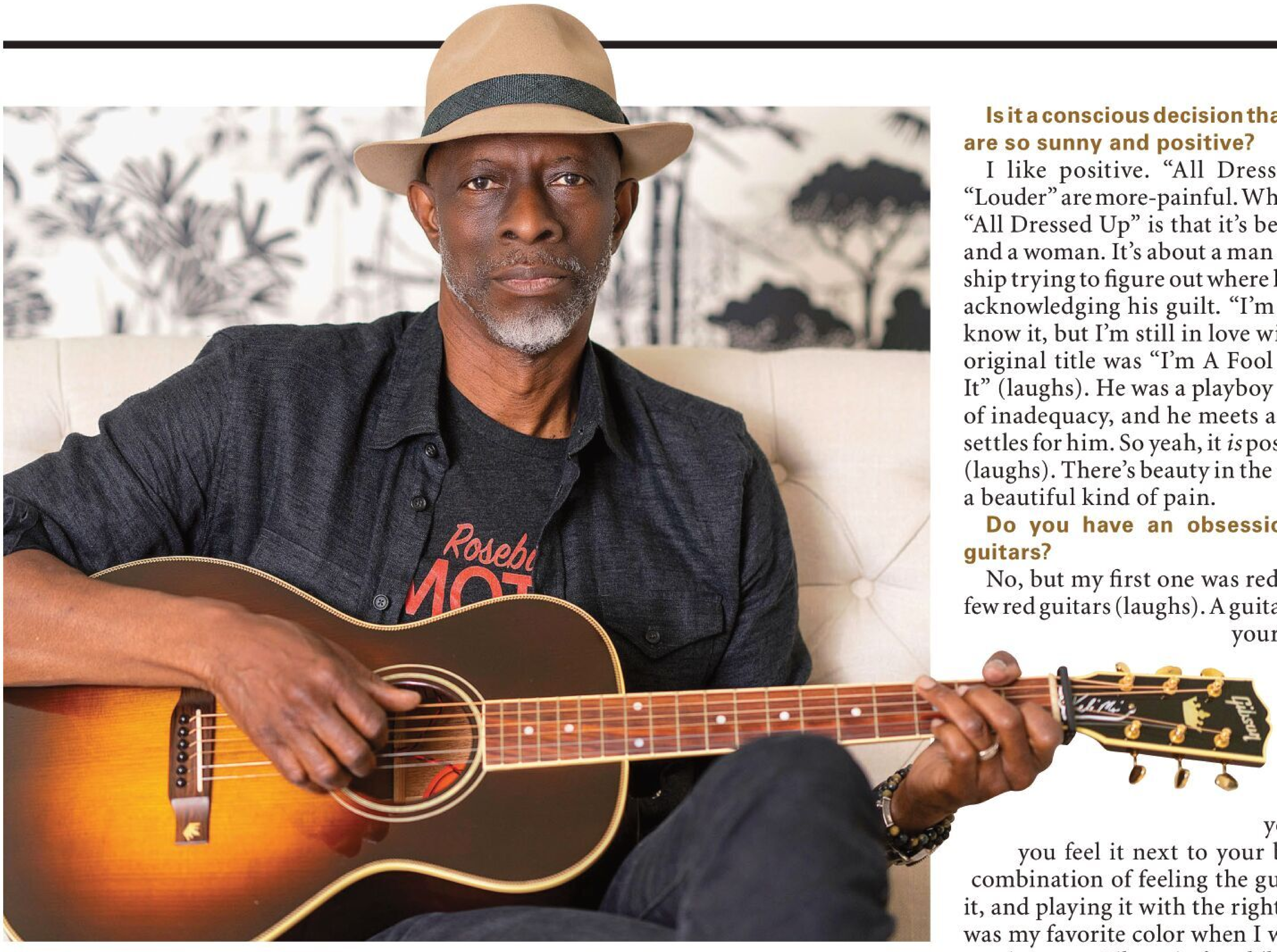
I learned to play that stuff sitting on the couch. I came up with a cool riff with these cool noises – there's no effects. I have it on the rhythm pickup, and I'm scraping my thumb nail toward the bridge. I like Fat Boy Slim and stuff like that where there's a little vocal hook to it. "Que Pasa" came from a James Brown sample. We couldn't keep James Brown, so while I was on my Megadeth kick, I said, "Try to get Dave Mustaine."

It was cool to hear Peter Criss swing with you on "Georgia On My Mind."

I love that intro because it's Peter and my producer, Barry Pointer, talking while the mics were on. Peter didn't know, and they were just chit-chatting. It was so special and so honest, and then boom, the song comes in. I thought it was a cool way to end the record. I'm very happy with the record, down to the cover. ***– Oscar Jordan***







KEB' MO'

Hearts and Ears

Keb' Mo's latest is folksy, endearing, and called *Good To Be*. Co-produced by Vince Gill and with Darius Rucker onboard, Keb' draws listeners in with a warm smile and earthy guitar tones. More than a bluesman, he has always followed in the footsteps of the classic tunesmiths from the Great American Songbook. *Good To Be* continues that tradition.

You're branded as a blues artist, but write accessible songs in the classic tradition.

I've always done these styles of music. I got known for the blues, but even on my debut Keb' Mo' album, it was not totally a blues album – that was the message that was put out; "blues artist." That's how everybody met me. As the years went by, people perceived that I was stretching out and breaking new ground, but I have only been peeling back the layers of stuff I'd been doing for years.

You collaborated with other songwriters on *Good To Be*.

Collaboration is good because you got two or more sets of eyes and ears on it. When it rings true to two or three people, it's a better scenario. You'll hit more people's hearts and ears. The title cut "Good To Be (Home Again)," was written by me and Money Mark Ramos Nishita, from the Beastie Boys. We wrote that from my house in Compton on a Zoom call. We were talking about old L.A., the '60s, the '70s, and driving through Gardena, South Central, and Watts.

How do you finish a tough song?

I love the process, and I love working on a great song. I'm not a singer's singer or a guitar player's guitar player; I'm not even a songwriter's songwriter. That's what keeps my work moving forward. If I can capture the feeling of the songs in the recording, I can go out and be of some consequence to the world.

Is it a conscious decision that your songs are so sunny and positive?

I like positive. "All Dressed Up" and "Louder" are more-painful. What I like about "All Dressed Up" is that it's between a man and a woman. It's about a man in a relationship trying to figure out where he stands and acknowledging his guilt. "I'm a fool, and I know it, but I'm still in love with you." The original title was "I'm A Fool And I Know It" (laughs). He was a playboy with feelings of inadequacy, and he meets a woman who settles for him. So yeah, it *is* positive in a way (laughs). There's beauty in the darkness. It's a beautiful kind of pain.

Do you have an obsession with red guitars?

No, but my first one was red and I have a few red guitars (laughs). A guitar has to catch your eye. I'm attracted by the way they look. You play a bit, and it catches your ear, then you feel it next to your body. It's the combination of feeling the guitar, holding it, and playing it with the right strings. Red was my favorite color when I was a kid, but my signature Gibson isn't red (laughs). I have a red PRS and a red 335, but most aren't. I gravitate to a few electrics, and even they all have a flaw. The one I play most is my custom PRS that Paul Smith put together for me. The one I play at home is my Gibson L-5 with flatwound strings. I love my Bedell nylon-string, too.

The Gibson Keb' Mo' Bluesmaster is a fantastic guitar.

It's a real working man's guitar. The best one is the Royale; they only made 50 of them, and it has an aged top and an aged sound. It's pricey. If I had to give all my guitars away except one, I'd keep the Keb' Mo'.

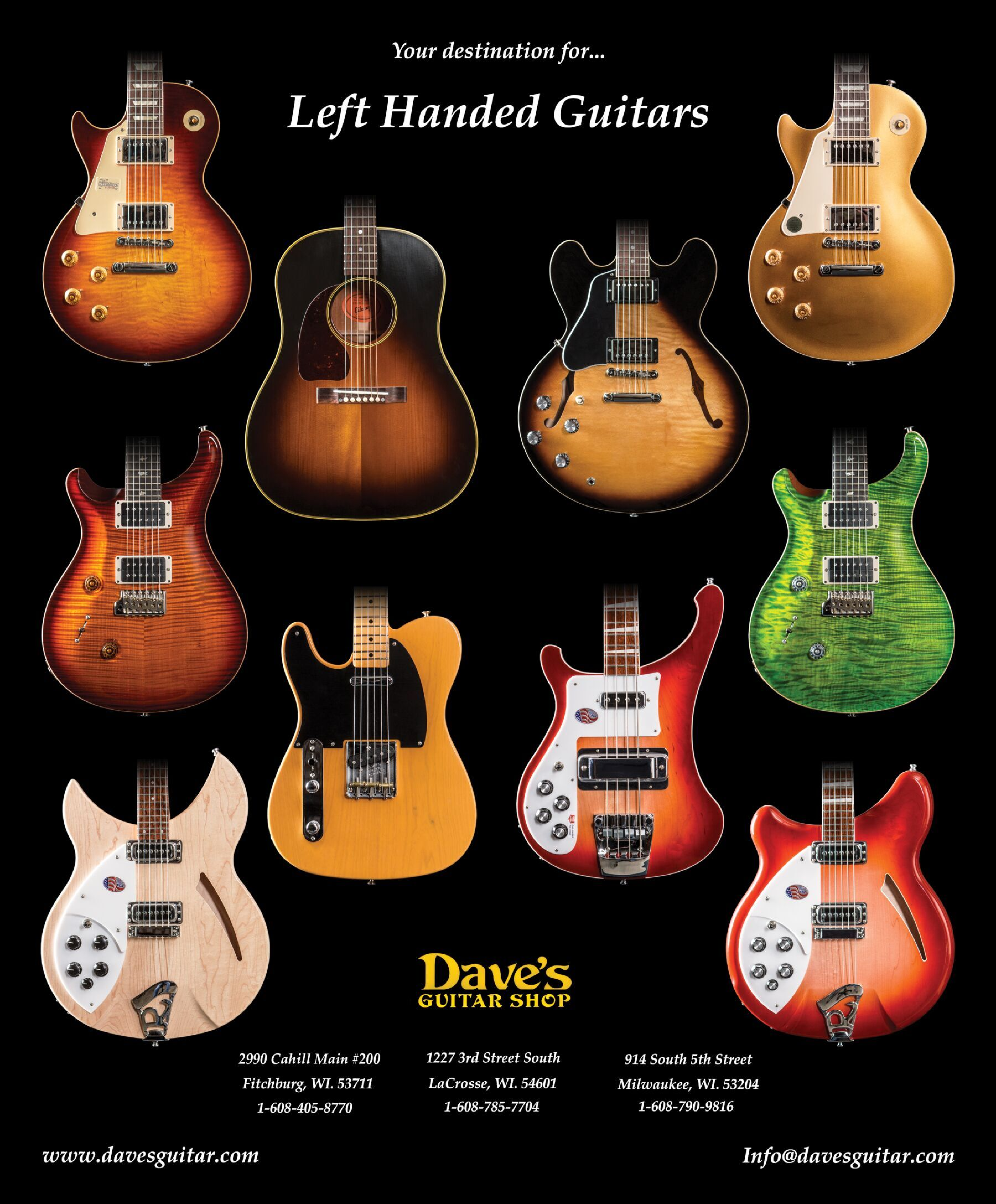
What are your go-to guitars when playing live?

The Strat, the 335, and my PRS, which has two humbuckers and a Soapbar. It's like a Strat with a five-position switch and a whammy bar. It's a workhorse that I can take anywhere. I like resonators and Nationals, too. I don't like to change guitars onstage.

What happens after the album drops.

We're going out on the road. We have to be careful, and our shows will be masked and vaxxed. I have some studio projects in the works, but it's too soon to talk about them. – ***Oscar Jordan***

Keb' Mo': Ed Rode.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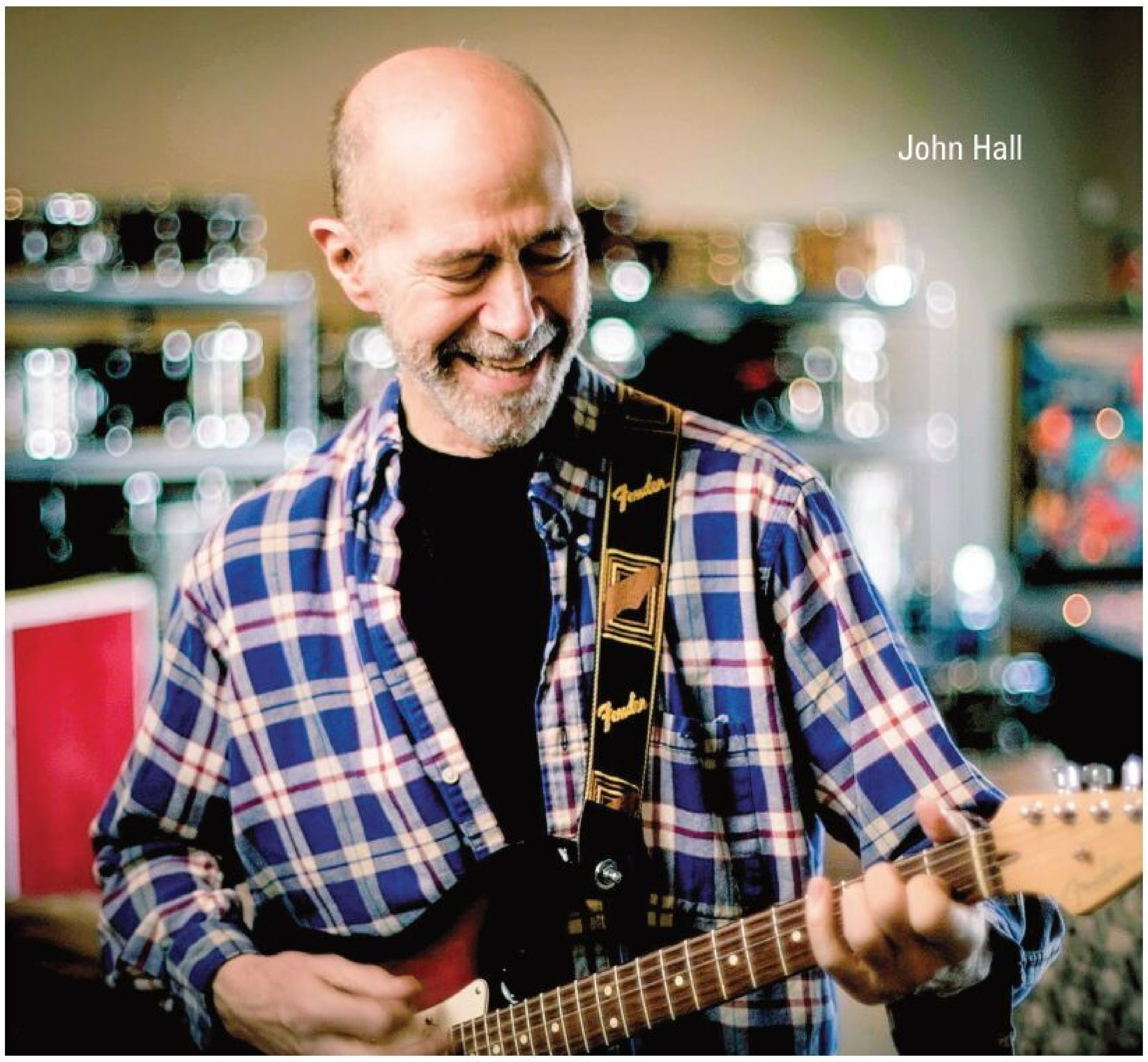

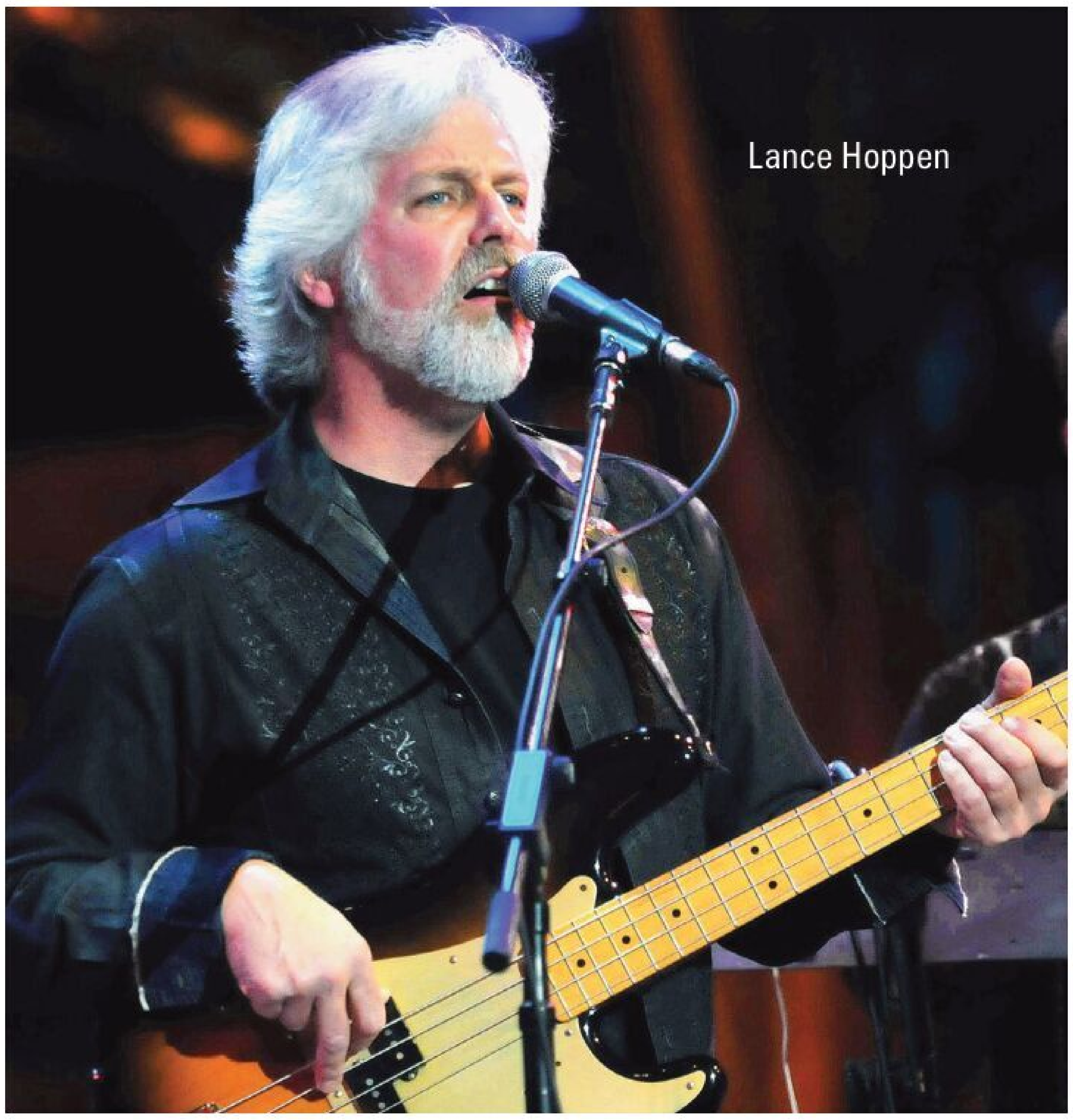

HALL AND HOPPEN

Ongoing with Orleans

In the '70s, the guitar-driven melodic rock of Orleans was all over the radio, with hits such as "Dance With Me," "Still The One," and "Love Takes Time" carried by tight harmony vocals and Allman-influenced guitar leads by John Hall and Larry Hoppen (1951-2012). Thanks to Hall and longtime bassist Lance Hoppen, the group stayed busy in the midst of a pandemic.

For decades, Hall's primary guitar has been a stripped-finish '56 Strat he bought in 1973.

"I've played it on most of my recorded work," he said. "I've changed tuners, frets, and a couple of corroded bridge pieces," he said. "I also changed the original switch to a five-way."

Likewise, Hoppen's longtime frontline bass was a '58 Precision bought at a shop in their native Woodstock in '75.

"The back finish is completely gone, as is the finish on the bevel, worn from sweat at scores of two-to-three-hour club gigs and concerts," he said. "It has a strange gouge above the pickguard that grew deeper over time, and for which I have never had a good explanation. The neck has finger dirt imbedded both in the fretboard and in the rear, adding to its character."

Both musicians still use their older instruments for recording, but modern Fenders are now their tools of the trade for concerts.

Like many other professionals, the band, which now also includes Hoppen sibling Lane on keyboards, as well as Fly Amero (*VG*, May '13) on guitar and Brady Spencer on drums, was forced by the Covid lockdown to communicate musically via computer files as they put together a Christmas album, *New Star Shining*.

Lance recalled the logistics of the improbable Yuletide concept.

"We've never been the type to follow trends," he said. "Once we decided to do this, we pitched songs to each other and wound up with this diverse set of 12. Some are internally written or co-written, some are covers, some had been previously recorded and were amended or left as-is. Some were started from scratch."

The title track, written in the mid '80s by Hall and his then-wife Johanna, was as-is except for remastering. First recorded in '86 as a duet by Ricky Skaggs and James Taylor, Orleans recorded its version in '94 for a holiday anthology released only in Japan.

One song that acquired modern musical upgrades was "Quiet Place," which Hall recorded in the '90s for one of his solo albums.

"It was a very sparse arrangement," Hoppen said of the original. "Just lead vocal, acoustic guitar, a little synth pad and bass, and John Sebastian on harmonica. In my head, I heard a much bigger production, with robust background vocal. I had to sing all the parts; I sent it to John for discussion, tweaking and ultimately, approval, then sent those parts out to Lane, Fly, and even Brady. But more than that, I had this idea for drums and percussion, utilizing four marching snare drums, congas, and a full kit. Because the track is not at all metronomic – by design – each part had to be carefully layered on top of each other."

"I Wish I Could Have Been There," "I'm Comin' Home For Christmas," "Snowed In With You" and a cover of the Little River Band's "Mary's Christmas" are new recordings.

"I'm particularly fond of 'I Wish I Could've Been There,'" said Hall. It's a collaboration between Johanna and me, along with our friend Tad Richards, a lyrical whiz from Saugerties/Woodstock. Tad helped finish the vision of a farmer leaving his warm house and family to care for a newborn lamb. Musically, it's a tribute to The Band, who were a major inspiration to us. [Little Feat's] Bill Payne plays piano and John Jorgensen plays mandolin."

Also included as a memorial tribute is a cover of "Winter Wonderland" by Larry Hoppen.

"I think I speak for all of us when I say we're very pleased with the results, especially given the way in which we had to do it," Lance said. "It was a journey into new skills for all of us."

Orleans is planning recordings and events to mark its 50th anniversary this year. **– *Willie G. Moseley***

John Hall: Rob Arthur. Lance Hoppen: Donna Amero.

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PHIL CHEN

1946-2021

His business card read "Phil Chen De Bassman," and his picks had "OD" after his name, standing for the Order of Distinction award he received in 2014 for his contributions to Jamaican music.

But Phil Chen's reach went far beyond the instrument or his homeland. Best known for playing on Jeff Beck's landmark *Blow By Blow* and Rod Stewart's hits "Hot Legs" and "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?," his lengthy list of credits also includes Jackson Browne, Eurythmics, Dion, John Fogerty, John Lee Hooker, Lita Ford, Bo Diddley, Jim Capaldi, Donovan, Joan Armatrading, Robin Gibb, Jimmy Witherspoon, Roger Taylor, the *Tommy* soundtrack, and Brian May's Star Fleet Project featuring Edward Van Halen.

Kingston-born Chen died December 14 of mesothelioma, at age 75.

Players who knew and worked with Chen shared stories and feelings about him with *VG*. Doors guitarist Robby Krieger, who was a bandmate in the Butts Band and in a Doors redux group with Ray Manzarek, said, "Phil was one of my best friends and one of the most unusual musicians I ever met. He truly loved music and influenced my love of music more than almost anyone."

In an unpublished 1986 interview, Chen recounted, "I left school and started hanging out with my cousin's group, the Vagabonds. Jimmy James, the lead singer, was incredible. I was their little roadie. I borrowed a Mel Bay guitar book and copied everything, but I picked it up from watching the guys. Then, in 1964, they decided to go to England, and needed an extra guitarist. I was 18 and wasn't playing bass yet."

The group morphed from ska to soul a la James Brown, Ben E. King, and Solomon Burke.

"We were managed by Peter Meaden, who managed the High Numbers [the Who], so we were the support group for them, Manfred Mann, and the Yardbirds," Chen noted. "But we were one of the biggest bands. After two or three years, the bass player left, so I switched to bass."

"Phil and I struck up a friendship based on our love of family and all things bass-related – especially the genius of James Jamerson," recalled L.A. bassist Bob Glaub (Jackson Browne, Warren Zevon, John Fogerty, Linda Ronstadt, among others). "We'd get together in his man cave and nerd-out on bass lines, tone, and strings. It was there that Phil also turned me on to the great Jamaican guitarist and composer Ernest Ranglin."

Chen championed Motown bassist Jamerson and jazz/studio guitarist Ranglin, mailing mix tapes and singing their praises. "I was highly influenced by James," he said. "He was very hard to copy because he was all over the place, but so melodic. And he never repeated himself; it's amazing."

"Phil was a really serious musician," Krieger noted. "He would constantly be practicing. He'd say, 'Must practice, mon, *bloodclaat rass*!'"

Though he didn't read music, Phil got work in London studios, doing sessions with Linda Lewis. Jeff Beck would show up and jam.

"With *Blow By Blow*, everything was feel with [drummer] Richard Bailey and myself," Chen said. "I don't play odd time signatures; I just tried to feel it. I used to play what I thought was right, and it wouldn't be correct, but it would suit me because I couldn't play all the different notes. You don't have to have great technique if you can feel. The chemistry was right. To me, it was like a session, and I didn't realize what we were doing, historically, at the time. I was listening to Michael Henderson, a monster bass player. He took Jamerson and moved it up the neck. He went onto *A Tribute To Jack Johnson* by Miles Davis, which I was listening to for 'Freeway Jam.'"

Chen played bass on the first reggae version of Neil Diamond's "Red, Red Wine," by Tony Tribe, later a #1 hit for UB40. Bernie Larsen remembers, "I brought Phil to meet the UB40 guys, and no one in the band could speak because they were awestruck."

Larsen and Chen were bandmates in David Lindley's El Rayo-X and Cry On Cue. Bernie says, "It was like a reggae master class driving with him."

But Chen didn't view himself as a "reggae bassist."

"I grew up with that feeling, and I can play it," he said. "That's a foundation, but I can play rock and roll, anything really. Reggae is something you don't play on the beat; it's a feel. There are so many great reggae bass players – Clifton 'Jackie' Jackson, Clive Chaman, 'Family Man' Barrett."

Following Jamerson's example, Chen used heavy-gauge LaBella flatwounds ("like rope") and rarely if ever changed them. "Rotosounds, you have to change, but LaBellas, the older the better," he said. "I've got a '51 slab P Bass, and I think it came with those strings; I never changed them."

"What a musical spirit," Larsen added. "Playing was a celebration of self and others, bringing joy to people's lives."

But Glaub gets the last word.

"Thank you, Phil, for being a servant and ambassador to the music; it was infectious. Your work is done, and your spirit is alive."
– Dan Forte

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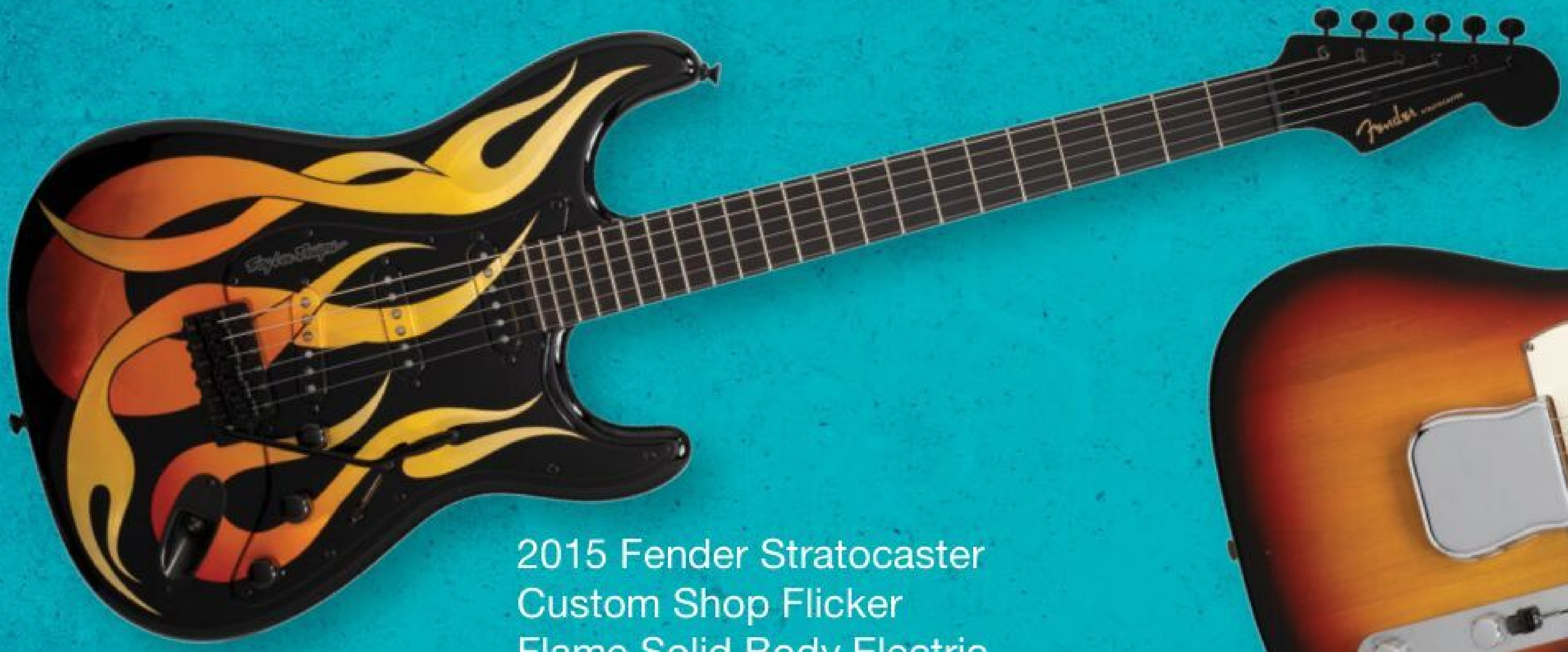

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MICKI FREE

Feel and Tone

He was the real-life team member on the infamous Charlie Murphy/Prince basketball game parodied on "Chappelle's Show," but Grammy winner Micki Free's latest is bursting with the sounds of blues-rock and psychedelia. *Turquoise Blue* has high-profile guests, but Free is all about emotional connections and crunchy tones. There's plenty of wah and overdrive, but Free's artistry shines through with grace and bold conviction.

What inspired *Turquoise Blue*?

The frickin' Covid, just like everybody else. I got locked down and went crazy. I started writing songs and riffs, getting into it, and doing what I do.

The first concert I ever went to was Black Sabbath, and Tony Iommi is the master of killer grooves. What tripped me out about Sabbath is they were *funky*. I also took inspiration from Gary Clark, Jr.'s last record. I wrote songs that I *felt*, and it just so happens to be an eclectic mix. In the end, it still has that Micki Free vibe.

There's a bit of Billy Gibbons influence on the record.

Dude, you weren't hearing a *little* bit – you were hearing a *lot* (laughs). I love The Reverend Billy G. He gave me a red Billy-Bo guitar, and I recorded all the rhythm tracks with it. My main thing is tone. If you can't get the tone right with your fingers, then it ain't happenin'. Gibbons is a major influence on my tone and the way I play. He knows where to put it, he knows when to lay out, and his tone is a crippler (laughs)!

How great was it working with Steve Stevens?

I love Steve. When I was in Shalamar, I saw him with Billy Idol. He said, "Hey, I love the way you dress, and especially your 'Dancing In The Sheets' video when you swing down and break through the window like Zorro." (laughs) The first solo he did was on "My Big Regret" – the flamenco solo, which is awesome. He also plays the first half of the solo on "Bye 2020." I did the same thing with Christone "Kingfish" Ingram and Gary Clark, Jr.; I play the second half. There's a difference in styles, and I wanted people to dig on that. Kingfish was burning, so I had to jump in with my little thing. I did some Cream-era Clapton with Albert and Freddie licks. I just put it into a big bowl and mix it up.

"World On Fire" dips into your Santana bag.

That song is about all the s**t going on in the world. It was my homage to Carlos. His wife, Cindy Blackman-Santana, is in a band with me called American Horse Trio and she played on the track. I tried to get Carlos to play, and he said, "Why do you need me? It sounds great." (laughs) I was in that vein, but this was all Micki Free s**t. I can't play like Carlos, but I can play what I feel when I listen to Carlos.

What's your main guitar?

I play a Teye with turquoise inlays, and it sounds f***ing good – captures a warm, bluesy, rock sound that you can manipulate. I love their guitars – shout-out to Evert Wilbrink. I just picked up a '59 Strat with a rosewood fretboard, I have a Hendrix Monterey Strat that sounds like God, and a Hendrix Flying V that I love. My wife did the paint job and Gibson put special pickups in it for me.

"Heavy Mercy" has a Robin Trower feel.

I love that loopy chorus effect on the solos. It's *so* sexy. I like to bend notes and let them swell. I don't do arpeggios and all that. My whole thing is feel and tone. I'm a Marshall purist and love Bluesbreakers; I have a 1974X and three 100-watt Hendrix stacks, but you can't use them unless you're playing Woodstock or something (laughs). What did you think of my version of "All Along The Watchtower?"

It's a tour de force!

(laughs) That's my favorite Hendrix song written by Bob Dylan (laughs). I've heard so many versions, so I tried to stay close to Jimi's, but didn't try to emulate the wah swells; I'm not Jimi. The band was rockin'.

What's next?

We're releasing "Judicator Blues" on blues radio, which features Kingfish. I want to tour. It's what I do. *Turquoise Blue* is the best record I've ever made. My friends are on it, my soul is in it, and it's a sign of the times, as Prince used to say. I hope people dig it. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Micki Free: Tommy Riley.

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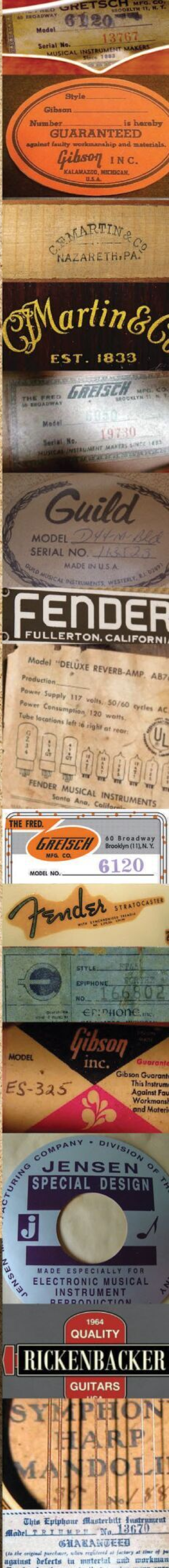

Scott T. Jones photo courtesy S. Jones.

SCOTT T. JONES

Midwest Fusion Ace

A lot of guitarists aspire to play jazz-rock, but it's a high bar. Based in St. Louis, Scott T. Jones hits the mark – and then some, heard on his awe-inspiring album Fictional Characters. With a crack band, including the late Allan Holdsworth's keyboardist Steve Hunt, Jones weaves deft fusion instrumentals and his guitar lines are simply stunning, despite ongoing hand issues. Mostly known for its ribs, beer, toasted ravioli, and famous arch, St. Louis now has another reason to be proud.

We hear a lot of fusion nods in your playing: Holdsworth, Scofield, Henderson. Who are your influences?

As much as I try and leave the obvious imitating behind, I do slip into a line or articulation now and then. And it use to bug me, but I kind of just embrace it now and consider it a continuation of certain dialects within a language. My full list of guitar influences is long, and spans multiple genres and instruments, but you're correct about the aforementioned trio. Then there's Metheny, Martino, Stern, Pass, Lukather, Landau, Vai, and many more.

Talk about your love for Rush and how that got you to fusion.

Initially, I started on drums. At one point, a friend said, "You should check out this band Rush," – and my head exploded on the spot. That kicked off my pursuit of learning Rush's entire catalog on drums. My parents divorced when I was 14, and my mom and I moved into a condo. The neighbors and police didn't care much for the noise, so I made the decision to just sell my drums, buy better guitar gear and make the change. Then, somewhere in a magazine article Rush mentioned they listened to jazz-fusion, specifically Allan Holdsworth. I thought "Well, if that's how they got this good, I'm in!" I pursued that path from that point on.

How do you get that thick-layered guitar harmony in your cover of Holdsworth's "Atavachron"?

Interestingly enough, the harmonies didn't come to me until late in the mixing process. Allan use to do this kind of harmony back with Bruford and UK, and some of his early solo work had it. It hit me one day, after I had already tracked the top line melody, that it would be a cool nod to that era of his playing, so I tracked my guitars one harmony at a time.

How did you develop such a complex soloing style and harmony, especially soloing over wild changes?

My 19-year-old daughter is in college, studying music.I didn't get that chance, but I did practice and study my ass off on my own. I had an eight-hour practice routine and listened to thousands of hours of these players. I'd learn the solos and heads, not always on my instrument, but I'd internalize them to the point of being able to scat along with solos. Combined with the technical stuff, and theory info I was working on, this language began to coalesce into something.

Tell us about your hand issues.

I've had trigger-finger surgeries – arthritis and a pinched nerve in my C6-C7 – that has weakened the pinky on my fretting hand. This past year, I've retrained my playing to completely avoid using my pinky unless absolutely necessary. My hybrid picking also took a hit with a new trigger forming in my middle finger of the picking hand. I just retrained my right hand to use my ring finger; it all switched over perfectly and my playing is better as a result.

How does a fusion guitarist in St. Louis make a living?

I've played in almost every cover band in town at one time and was the salaried staff guitarist, music director, and arranger at a high-tech mega-church for almost two decades. That ended in 2008 and I teach privately now. I also quit playing in the cover band scene to be more present for my kids when they were with me. The hand issues now keep me low key and teaching only, but I'm in a good place musically.

Which guitars, amps, and effects did you use on the album?

The main guitars were my Kiesel Zeus, a Carvin Holdsworth HH2x, and a Schecter Sun Valley Shredder with a Floyd and Sustainiac. The amps were completely self-contained profilers: a Kemper Profiler Stage, Line 6 Helix software plug-in, and an old Digitech RP1000. Keyboardist Steve Hunt mixed the album, and he had a lot to do with my sound as well. He took what I'd tracked and made it shine, cut through, and sparkle. He did play with Allan, so I wasn't worried about giving him the freedom to tweak. Steve nailed it.

Your guitar tone on the album is ferocious. Did you record your amp at considerable volume?

It was all within the DAW – zero speakers saw vibration. I live in a condo and am a good neighbor, so I hate being "that guy." (laughs)

Really?

Yes. Believe it or not, there are no live or miked amps on the album. – ***Pete Prown*** VG

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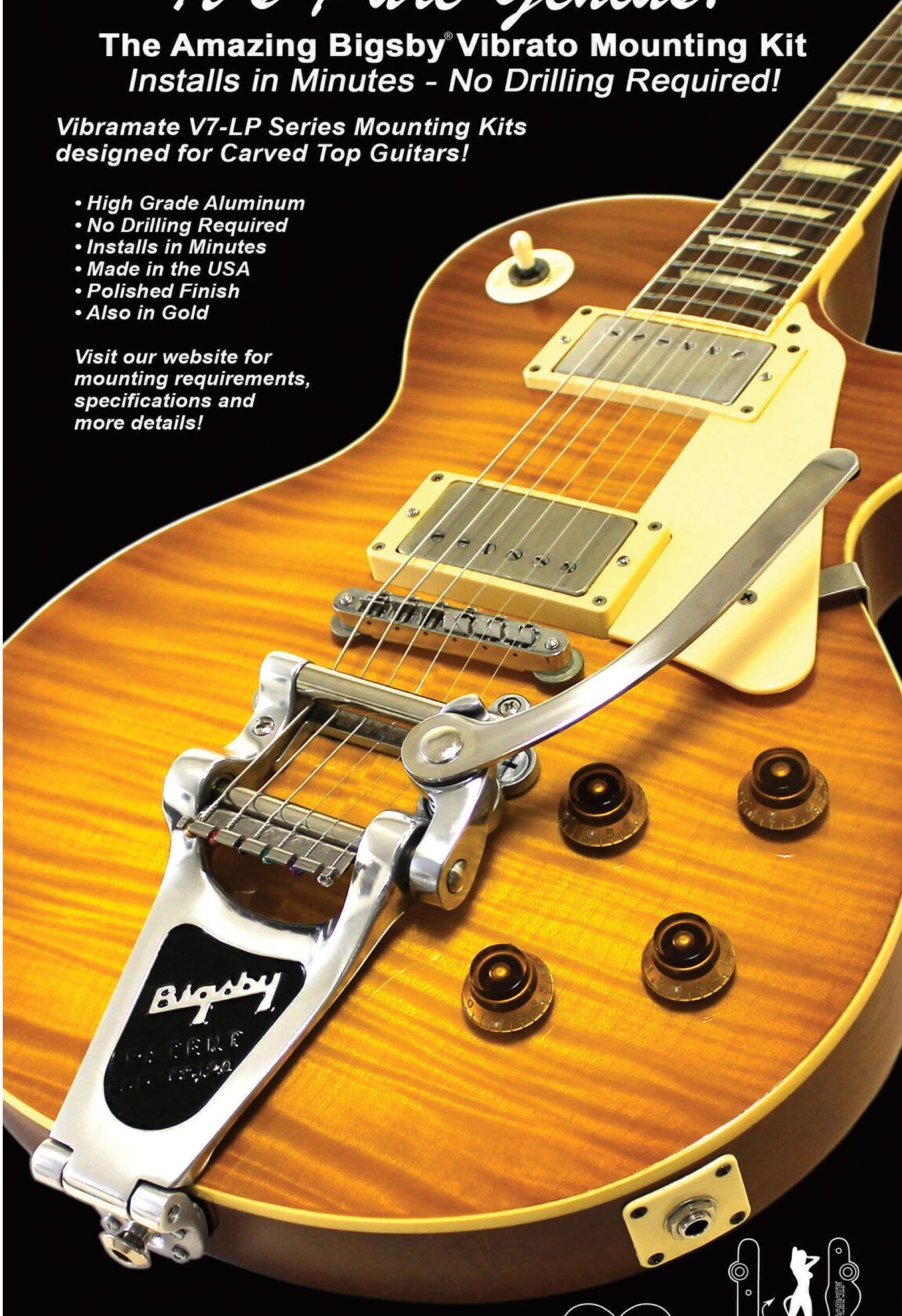

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'62 Olympic White/Slab Rose neck 100% original, Amazing flamed neck!!
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'65 Olympic White Only refret and changed nut, Mint-Green pickguard.
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BLOND AMBITION

The '61 Fender Bassman

BY DAVE HUNTER

If there's any truth to the adage "It's the journey, not the destination," it is fully embodied in the evolution of the Fender Bassman. While traveling the road toward building a better bass amplifier, Leo Fender and company inadvertently produced several of the best *guitar* amplifiers ever made... then unceremoniously moved on.

As one of the most-storied amps of all time, the Bassman has been featured in this space before, including a look at the transitional 1964 6G6-B blackface version in the March '12, issue, and an overview of the model's history in July '18. So varied were the iterations of the design, however (and so brief some of the stops along that road), that several unusual versions still merit closer attention.

In this spirit, we bring you this 1961 head. As popular music got louder and electric guitars found themselves in bigger venues, Fender realized the 4x10" Bassman combo was far from optimal for low-end reproduction, and put much thought into presenting the world a better bass amp. As the '50s became the '60s, the company was moving fast and furious through circuit designs, all in the name of increased power and headroom. That meant the folks in Fullerton sometimes released amps that existed for only a few months in an unchanged state, and innovations often came so quickly that official model designations (generally listed on tube charts) couldn't keep up.

The date stamp on this chart is obscured by black spray paint applied to its blond Tolex (in later years, guitarists often did this to make blond amps look like current-issue black), but the serial number stamped on the back of the chassis (BP00716) tells us it was built around the middle of '61, which is confirmed by other component codes; for its part, the circuit tallies with this. In fact, everything discernible from its build indicates this is an example of the debutante Bassman in the piggyback Professional Series that was new for late 1960/early '61, *except* for something on the tube chart – the Model number in the upper-left, given as 6G6-A, with the "A" penciled in, as was often done at the factory when a model preceded printing of new charts. The main change from 6G6 to 6G6-A, however, was the replacement of the tube rectifier with solid-state diodes – yet this amp still has the GZ34 tube rectifier.

Though each channel carries the same controls, the complex circuit behind the Bass channel is very different from the traditional Fender Normal.

1961 FENDER 6G6(A) BASSMAN
- Preamp tubes: four 7025 (12AX7)
- Output tubes: two 5881 (6L6GC)
- Rectifier: GZ34 tube
- Controls: Bass channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; Normal channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; shared: Presence
- Output: approximately 50 watts RMS

The overlap and partial misidentification is nothing unusual for Fender in the early '60s, and goes to further prove how rapidly the company was pushing forward. But it's interesting, nonetheless.

Otherwise, the 6G6 and 6G6-A circuits display the same layout in the preamp stages of both channels. The Normal channel – the one that draws many guitarists who play these amps today – follows the topology that would become familiar for Fender amps of the '60s, with Bass and Treble controls followed by Volume (the reverse of what's implied by the control panel) sandwiched between two gain stages. The Bass channel, however, is great for tones outside the traditional blackface mold (some will insist this channel in the 6G6 and 6G6-A should be modded to 6G6-B specs, but of course it's worth exploring what the amp has to offer before enforcing drastic changes on an original example).

In short, in these earliest versions of the Bassman head, Fender went a long way toward producing a distinctive and powerful bass sound, to the extent of employing four full

Amp courtesy of Steven Zakel, photos by Harold Eblen.

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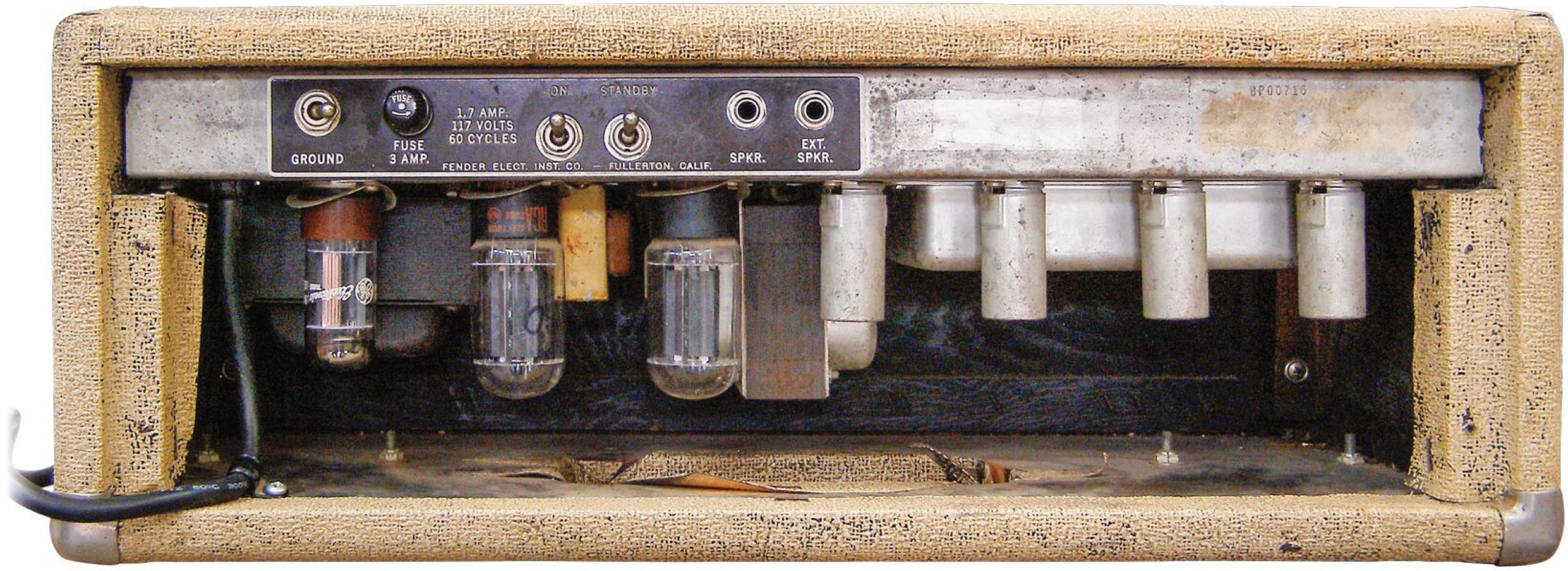


Though the tube chart says this amp is a Model 6G6-A, the GZ34 tube rectifier at the far left declares it has more in common with the early 6G6.

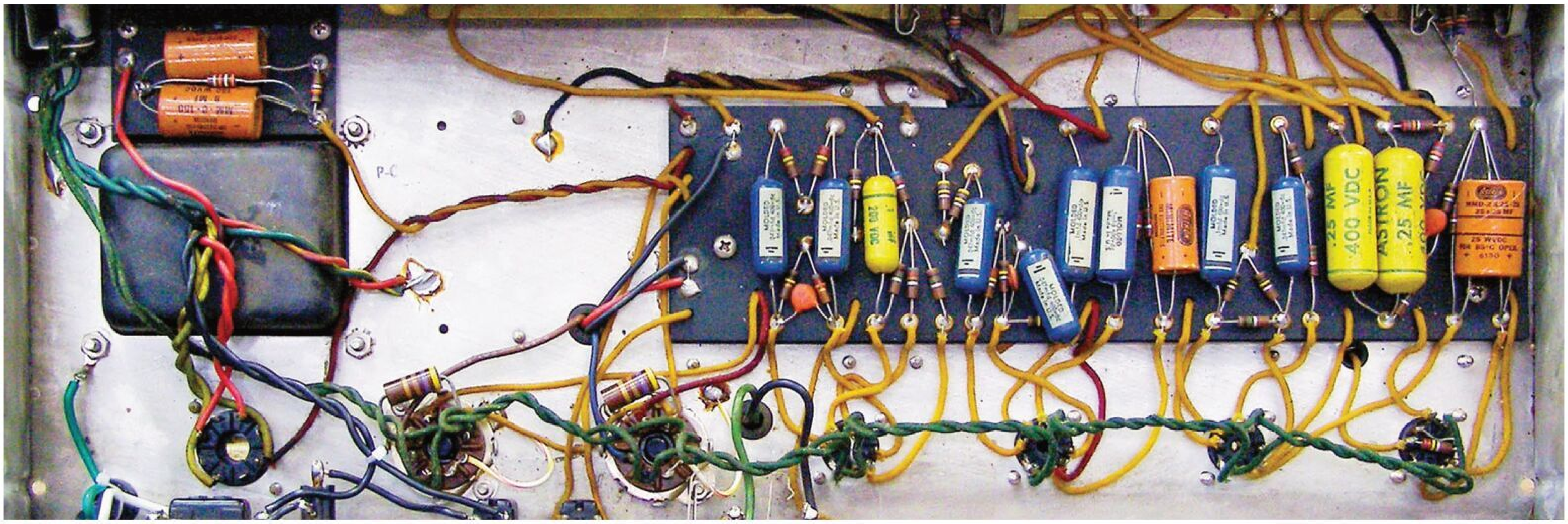
triodes–two complete 7025 preamp tubes–in the Bass channel's preamp alone. In describing Fender's brown- and blackface amps of the '60s, one of the changes often noted from tweed-circuit architecture left behind after '59/'60 is the cathode-follower tone stage, which was otherwise dropped from these at the dawn of the new decade.

That declaration totally disregards the first iterations of the piggyback Bassman, however, which retained an odd and even more-complex cathode-follower preamp stage in the Bass channel, following the first gain stage. This arrangement provides a very low-impedance, high-current signal running to the vital Bass control on that channel, a convoluted network that might induce signal loss if this boost wasn't ahead of it. The Volume potentiometer follows the Bass network, and the channel's Treble control was located two gain stages further along the chain (in other words, both triodes of another full 7025/12AX7 preamp tube), and right before the channel's feed to the phase inverter. Going back to the front of the line, that Bass control is an entirely independent EQ stage in its own right, comprising a little network that's about as complex as the entire EQ stage in the Normal channel.

One of the main changes from 6G6-A to 6G6-B was moving the Treble control back in the chain one full gain stage, sandwiched between the two triodes of the channel's second 7025. That made its impact on overall gain structure less dramatic, and some feel it makes it an even better preamp for six-string guitar than the Bass channel of the 6G6 and -A. This alone drove many players to these amps back in 1962-'63, and it just so happens this is the Bassman version Brian Setzer has long favored, though the rockabilly maestro plugs his Gretsch 6120 (via a Roland Space Echo) into the Normal channel. Regardless, the original and "A" models can still sound fierce when used right.

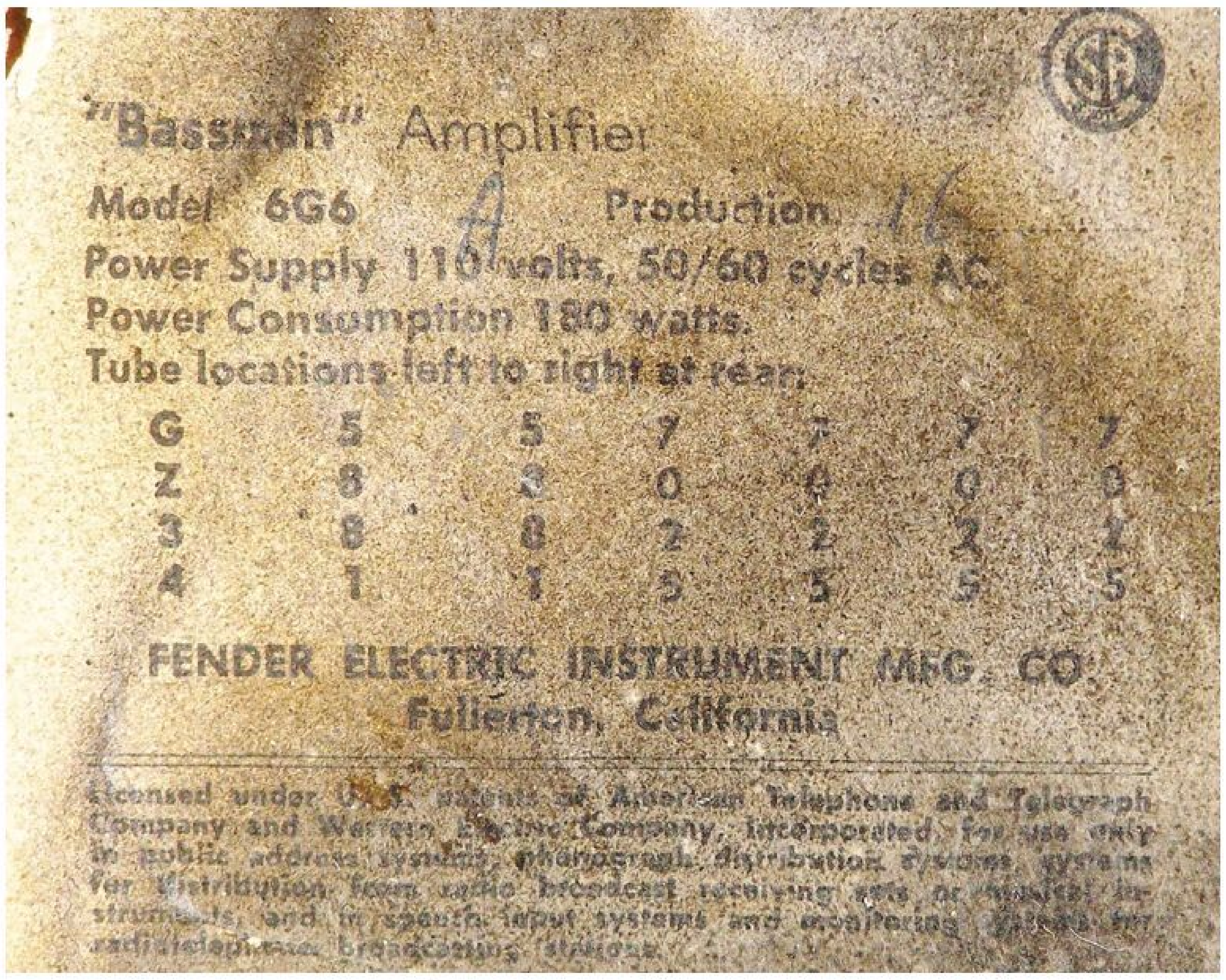
In addition to its interest as a transitional early Bassman, this example is fascinating for its impressive originality. The amp's current owner, *VG* reader Steven Zakel, tells us he purchased it in 1980 and has mostly kept it in storage. Beyond a full servicing to bring it back to playing condition, nothing has been done other than adding a three-prong AC cord and the removal of that spray paint, prior to his ownership.

A look inside the chassis reveals a board full of original components, including the so-called "blue Molded" caps of the era, four



In addition to the blue Molded caps common in '60s Fenders, this Bassman carries three yellow Astron signal caps, holdovers from the tweed era, along with its orangey-brown Astron filter caps.

yellow Astron signal caps (one tucked alongside the Presence control) of the type used throughout the mid/late tweed era, and Astron electrolytic filter caps in their orangey-brown cardboard covers. Fire it up and, whether you're injecting a Precision Bass or Jazzmaster, there's a lot of tone to be had.



The upper right-hand corner of the tube chart is too paint-splattered for the date code to be legible, but "Model 6G6-A" in the upper left speaks of the amp's transitional status.

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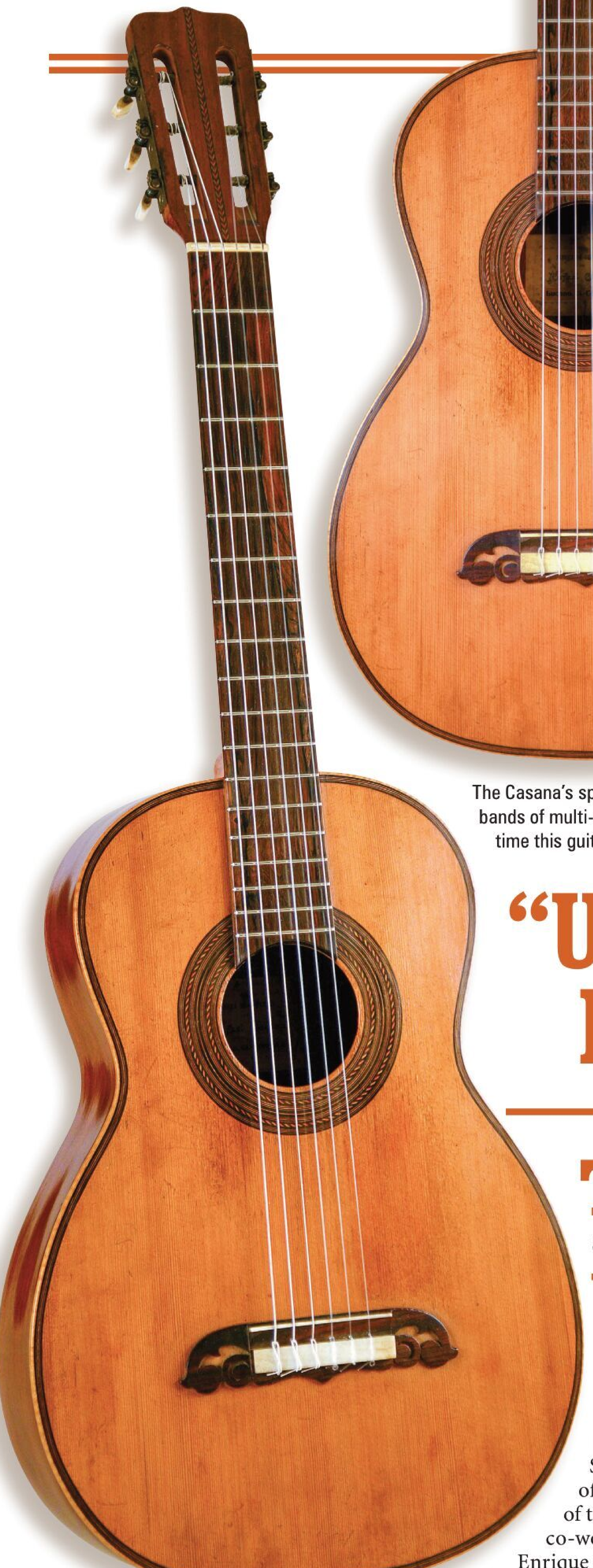


The Casana's spruce top has multiple purfling lines around the soundboard edge, and its rosette has two bands of multi-color "rope" with concentric rings. Its fanciful bridge design was falling out of favor by the time this guitar was built. The back is bookmatched Cuban mahogany, purfled with contrasting maple.

"UNICORN": CA. 1910 RAFAEL CASANA

BY R.E. BRUNÉ

This extremely rare guitar has been dubbed the "Unicorn" by virtue of the fact that for all his fame, it may be the only surviving example of an instrument made by Rafael Casana.

Listed in guitar "genealogy" charts as the link between the early Madrid school of the Ramírez brothers and the regional Córdoba school, Casana was born circa 1866 in Sevilla, and worked in the shop of José Ramírez, I before the turn of the 20th century. At that time, co-workers would have included Enrique García (who later moved to Barcelona), Julian Gómez Ramírez (no relation; he later moved to Paris and was the inspiration for Robert Bouchet), and Antonio Emilio Pascual Viudes (who moved to Buenos Aires in 1909).

Listed in period trade guides as a guitar maker or carpenter, Casana perhaps divided his time between unprofitable guitar making and bill-paying carpentry, which could explain the dearth of surviving instruments. In Córdoba, he occupied two addresses –

Calle San Fernando 55 (printed on his labels) and, from about 1910 onward, Lucano 15, where this instrument was made.

Very little is known about Casana, and no known photos have survived, but, based on this example which has survived nearly intact, we can say he was among the most-skilled makers of his era, with workmanship and technical mastery superior to the finest guitars made by José Ramírez, I.

THE INSTRUMENT

The guitar is made with a soundboard that is well-arched both along and across the grain – a style of construction known then as a "guitarra de tablao," or literally, a bar guitar. The José Ramírez catalog of circa 1913 refers to them as "guitarras ahuevadas" or egg-shaped guitars. They were also known as "guitarras Sevillanos," or Sevillian-style, as the method of construction unique to this model originated in Sevilla in the mid 19th century with the Soto y Solares family and other makers. This particular model was very popular with gypsy flamenco players in the late 19th century, and many flamenco artists are seen playing them in photos of the era. They could be made of many types of woods for sides and backs, but the intended usage was for flamenco music.

To produce the highly domed tops, instruments were made on dished-out boards called "soleras," which were cut to the exact *inside* outline of the guitar body. The extension for the neck was planed to hold neck angle during assembly, tops were braced with stiff braces (from five to 11 fans), which forced the thin top into the dished portion. The top was trimmed to the edge of the solera and the bent sides were fitted against the solera to meet the top outline. Individual glue blocks, called "tentellones" or "peones," were glued around the perimeter of the inside to attach the sides to the top. Back linings were installed, the back fitted (which was also usually arched with shaped cross braces), and, once it was glued on, the geometry of the instrument was set before it was purfled and the fretboard/frets installed. Bridges were shaped and installed last.

In the 19th century, this method migrated from Sevilla to Madrid as gypsy flamencos sought larger and richer venues. Madrid maker Francisco González, reputed to have been the teacher of Ramírez, was among the first Madrid builders to adopt this style of tablao as his own model. So, while its likely that Rafael Casana learned this method of construction from Ramírez, he would have been very familiar with these models from his youth in Sevilla, where they were ubiquitous.

Like many Spanish instruments of the era, the top is made of random pieces of spruce rather than a two-piece bookmatched set typically sold by wood suppliers. The spruce may have been recycled from old piano soundboards or furniture; makers at the time did not throw away anything of value. The sides and back are Cuban mahogany, which was highly prized by guitar makers for its weight, hardness, and stability – a near-perfect wood for sides and backs. The back is bookmatched, and all of the plates are worked to the nth degree of safety and

The interior during restoration (left); small-body instruments such as this were popular. A piece of rosewood is spliced between the nut and first fret (middle), and the head design echoes patterns used by Francisco González and José Ramírez. It's fitted with expensive mechanical tuning machines.

thinness – no margin was left for future refinishing. Fortuitously, the instrument still bears 100 percent of its original French polish of shellac, which was very lightly applied.

By the mid 19th century, Cuban mahogany was a commercially extinct product, having been logged-out by the English furniture industry. As a result, it was often salvaged from broken/discarded furniture bought at flea markets, where certain pieces had hand-sawn veneers thick enough to use for guitar sides. If it had cracks or splits, they simply glued it, sometimes reinforcing the inside with paper. Guitars, being very delicate, were expected to crack anyway.

The fretboard is very notable, as the section from the nut to the first fret is a different piece of rosewood than the rest; the original rosewood blank was apparently too good to discard, but not long enough to reach from nut to sound hole, so Casana augmented the nut end, which was much smarter than by the sound hole, where movement of the soundboard might cause heaving of the two pieces and, consequently, buzzing due to lifted frets.

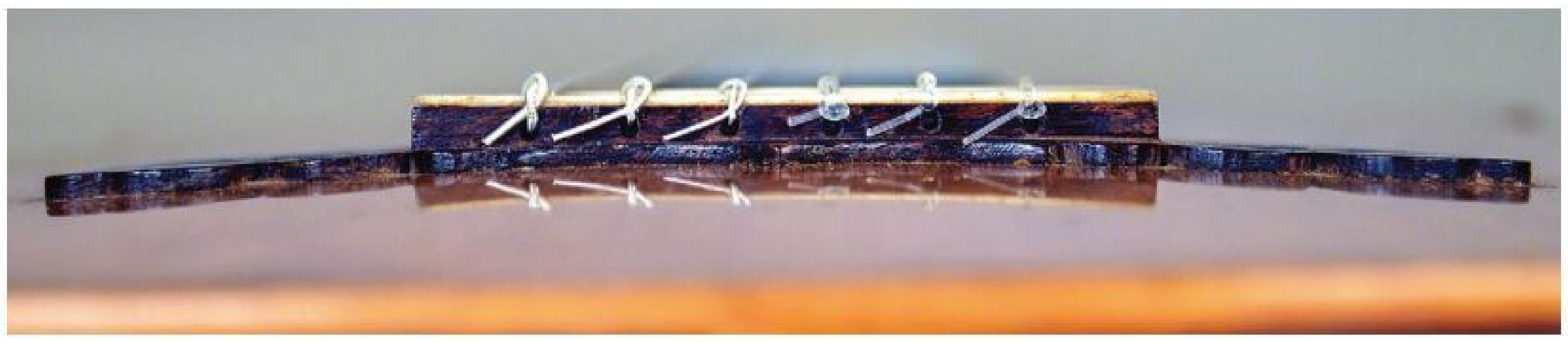
The bridge is a fanciful shape sometimes used by José Ramírez, Francisco González, and other Madrid makers. By the time this instrument was made, however, this fanciful

design was falling out of favor for the traditional rectangular Torres bridge. Because the top is so highly domed, the neck is actually angled a few millimeters *back* from the side-edge assembly, but when referenced to the plane of the domed soundboard, it's lifted two millimeters. The precision of the neck angle means the bridge and saddle are very low to the top, as demanded by flamenco players, so there is minimal torque on the soundboard, which is still in perfect shape. The scale is 24$^{1}/_{4}$" (618 mm) with $^{1}/_{16}$" compensation (most Spanish makers were still working in inches rather than metric). While this seems very short, it's about the same as a full-size scale with capo at the first fret. With a shorter scale, the same gauge of gut strings might have lasted a bit longer due to the reduced tension.

Internally, the back is attached to the sides via solid bent/crimped spruce linings installed in three sections with the portion going around the waist bend being made of fractured green wood. This was a quick and easy way to bend and install linings. The back averages only 1.6 mm thick and yet only carries two cross braces in the lower bout – a bold and gutsy omission of the traditional third cross strut (near the neck foot). The soundboard cross struts are not made of soft wood, but some kind of light-colored hard wood, possibly basswood or linden. It likely was also recycled from old furniture carcasses, possibly having been drawer guides. Interior work was cut with sharp planes and chisels – there's no visible evidence of sandpapering.

DECORATION

The guitar is fairly elaborate, with multiple purfling lines inlaid around the soundboard edge. Due to their bold width, they're only about half the thickness of the top, which averages around 1.7 mm, making it a tricky installation. The rosette has two bands of multi-color "rope" combined with varied concentric rings, all precisely inlaid for the partial depth; the interior is minimally reinforced under this area. Setting of the rosette was done precisely, without cutting through



The bridge (top) conforms to the domed top. Rather than have new labels printed, Casana applied a correction over his shop's former address). "Jaleo," by John Singer Sargent, 1882.

to the other side – a defect often observed in Spanish instruments.

The body is purfled with slightly figured maple that contrasts with the Cuban mahogany, and the head was fitted with mechanical tuning machines from day one – an expensive upgrade. We can safely say this instrument was made for a patron of means who must have been a skilled player, as the fretwork and action are perfect, as is intonation. Its head design echoes the pattern used by Ramírez and González.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of Rafael Casana lies in his move from Madrid, during which he brought this style of tablao construction to Córdoba, influencing Miguel Rodríguez, Sr. (1888-1975), whose early guitars show this Sevilla method of top doming. An example of this influence can been seen in the 1929 Rodríguez instrument shown on pages 86-87 of *A Collection of Fine Spanish Guitars From Torres to the Present*.

Its worth mentioning that Rodríguez lived on San Fernando #70, just down the street from Casana (San Fernando #55). While there is no formal indication that Rodríguez studied with Casana, the influence is clear in his early instruments, which evolved from the tablao style and morphed into their own model, with touches of influence from José Ramírez, III.

CONCLUSION

This is the missing link between Sevilla, Madrid, and Córdoba in the dispersal of the tablao-style guitarmaking throughout Spain. While this model had a relatively short period of popularity before being replaced with the flatter Torres, it was favored by gypsy flamenco players, and even made it into the iconic 19th-century painting called "Jaleo," by John Singer Sargent, in which two guitarists are shown flailing while the singer inspires the flamenco dancer. On the wall behind are tablao guitars hanging in reserve, ready to jump into the maelstrom of Dionysian inspiration. More than any other art of the 19th century, this painting depicts the typical marketplace, and use for these instruments in their time. In this context, it's all the more miraculous this singular "Unicorn" managed to survive over a century in such pristine condition.

Richard Bruné began making guitars in 1966 and is a former professional flamenco player. He has written for the Guild of American Luthiers and other organizations for more than 50 years and lectured/consulted for many major museums and institutions, along with providing expertise for private collectors. He has contributed to countless books on the subject in addition to publishing technical drawings of iconic Spanish guitars. He is on Facebook, Youtube and can be reached through his website, rebrune.com.

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Classics

If your radio was tuned to a country station even for a few minutes anytime in the last 30 years, odds are you've heard Chris Leuzinger's 1952 Les Paul.

A Florida native, he has studied and played rock, blues, and country around the world with this guitar, backing Eddie Rabbitt, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Crystal Gayle, and others (see our interview in this issue). But it's his work with Garth Brooks that put its sounds into millions of ears.

Wanting to pursue the tones of the blues-rock guitar gods of the day, in 1969, Leuzinger got the guitar after making a trade on the mean streets of New York City. Though stripped of its original finish, the tailpiece, pickups, and tuners were right.

"It didn't look great, so I took it to Dan Armstrong's shop," he said. "About a week later, I stopped by to check on it; the finish guy had sprayed the yellow in the middle and was getting ready to shade the edges. After he'd colored it in just a bit, we both said, 'That looks pretty cool...' So we left it lighter. I also had them swap the tailpiece to a Tune-O-Matic."

Post-Armstrong, the guitar went straight to hard duty as Leuzinger's number one, and a close look at the selector switch reveals a fix forced by his fondness for tweaking tones on the fly.

"That bridge pickup can be spikey, so for lead parts I'd set the switch in the middle and roll the Tone on the neck pickup all the way off," he said. "Then I'd roll that pickup down a bit just to add some warmth."

All that action took a toll on the wood under the switch.

"It started crumbling, and eventually felt like it was going to give way," Leuzinger said. "So, in '72 or '73, I took it to Sho-Bud Guitars, in Nashville, and they put a dowel in to solidify it."

In '74, he got a gig backing Dobie Gray on tour, and at first had only the guitar's original brown case.

"When we got to L.A., our roadie said to me, 'I'm taking you to the case company *today*.' So, we went and had an Anvil case made to protect it better on planes."

Armstrong's shop was just the first of three that would eventually do major work on the guitar.

"I was on my way to a rehearsal one day in '78 or '79, and stood it behind my van then went back into the house to get something," he said. "I happened to get a call, saying rehearsal was canceled, and I forgot about the guitar. A while later, I went to leave and backed right over it. I was living in a guest house in an alley, so not only did I run over it, but I left it laying there for four hours. When I got home, I saw it and totally freaked out."

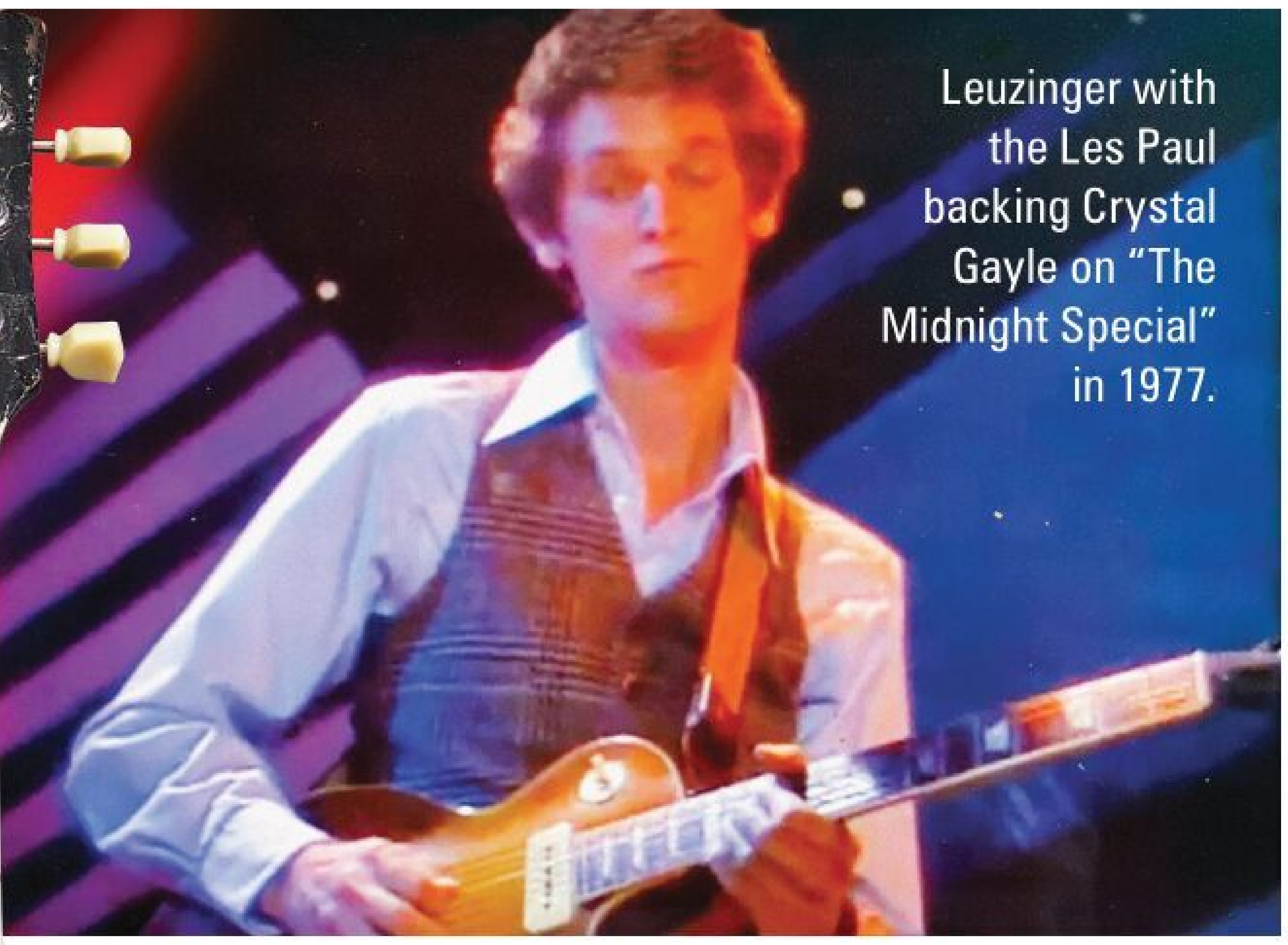
The guitar suffered a split at the heel. Fortunately, the neck and fretboard were not damaged.

"I packed it off to John Carruthers, in L.A., and told him, 'I play this *all* the time. If you can please get it done quickly, I would really appreciate it,' and he put it back together so well it was like nothing happened; there's a small crack that's visible, but as far as playability, you'd never know."

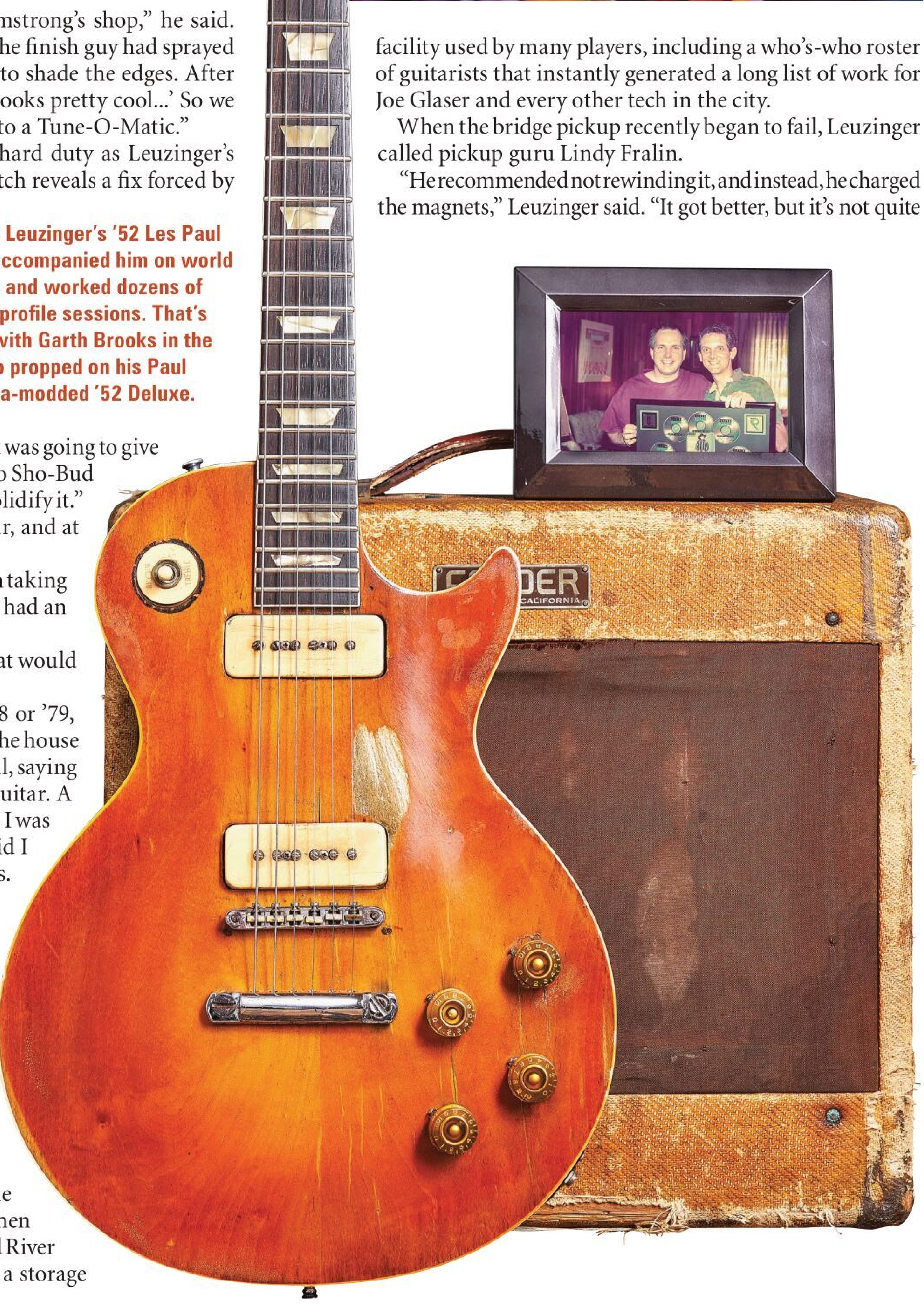
Its most-recent indignity was being among the gear damaged by the 2010 flood in Nashville, when water pushed outside the banks of the Cumberland River for several days. Among the places affected was a storage facility used by many players, including a who's-who roster of guitarists that instantly generated a long list of work for Joe Glaser and every other tech in the city.

When the bridge pickup recently began to fail, Leuzinger called pickup guru Lindy Fralin.

"He recommended not rewinding it, and instead, he charged the magnets," Leuzinger said. "It got better, but it's not quite

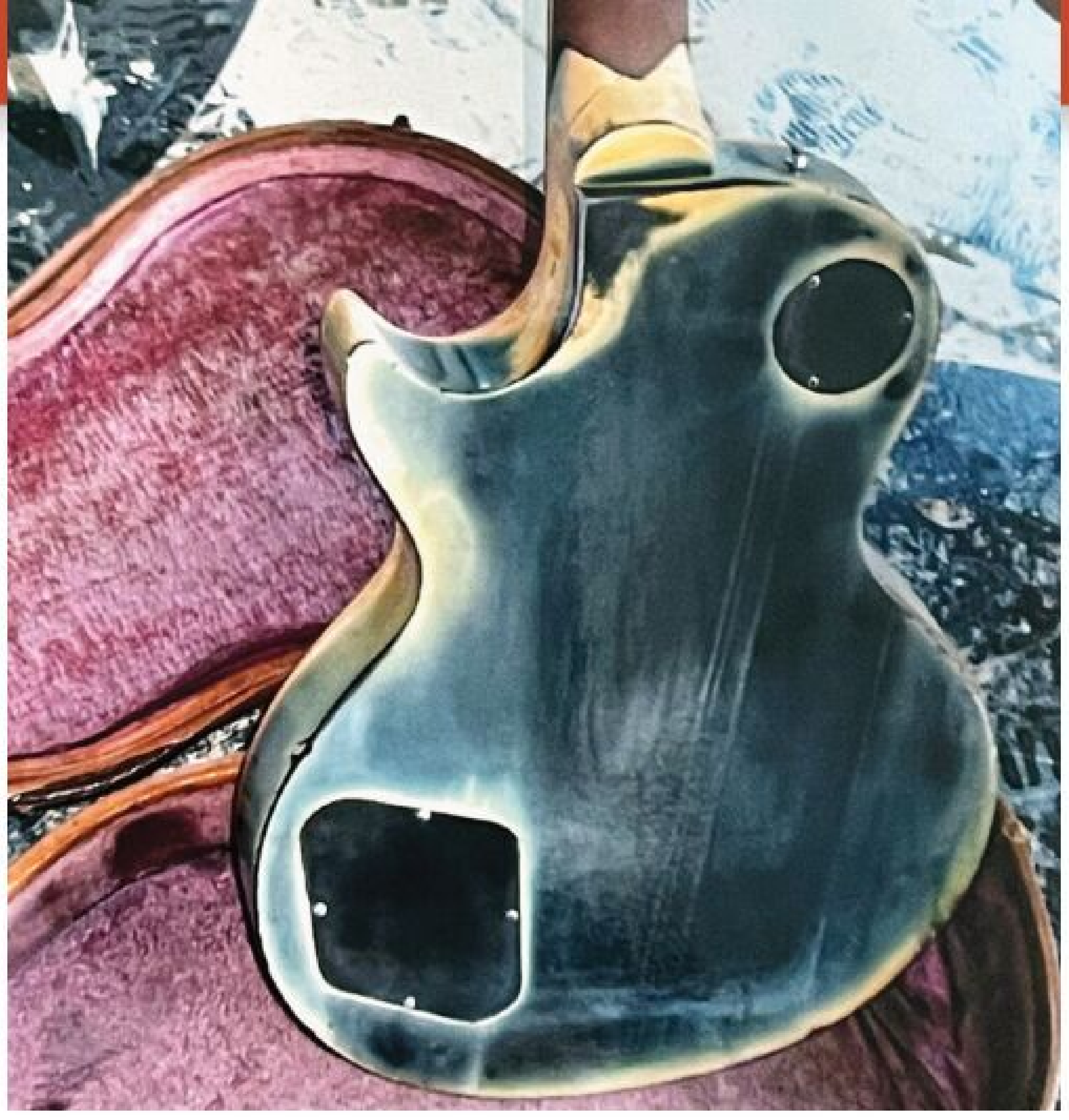


Leuzinger with the Les Paul backing Crystal Gayle on "The Midnight Special" in 1977.



Chris Leuzinger's '52 Les Paul has accompanied him on world tours and worked dozens of high-profile sessions. That's him with Garth Brooks in the photo propped on his Paul Rivera-modded '52 Deluxe.

Photo by John Albani.



The back shows the neck repair by John Carruthers and finish damage from the 2010 flood.

the same, so I've been trying different pickups. That neck pickup is probably the best P-90 I've ever heard, and everybody who plays it says the same. It's just *creamy* and sustains for days. Once I get the bridge pickup right, the guitar will be back in all its glory." **VG**

Do you have a classic/collectible/vintage guitar with an interesting personal story that might be a good fit for "Classics?" If so, send an e-mail to ward@vintageguitar.com for details on how it could be featured.

EFFECTS FLURRY

THE LATEST PEDALS

MAESTRO

The all-analog Maestro Fuzz-Tone FZ-M boasts a Mode switch that provides two pedals in one with both an FZ-1 inspired fuzz sound and a thicker, more modern fuzz tone. Its 3-knob layout features Level, Attack to control the amount of fuzz, and Tone control which lets you adjust the timbre from bright and raspy to warm and wooly and anywhere in between. **www.maestroelectronics.com**

RED PANDA

Raster 2 is a stereo/dual delay pedal inspired by classic studio delays, with intuitive control and endless tweak-ability for building delay and pitch-based effects. Micro pitch shifting, chorus, flanging, and phase-shifted delays, polyphonic pitch and frequency shifting, reverse delays, and insane modulation in a pedalboard-friendly size with MIDI. Raster is a sound designer's dream. Learn more at **http://redpandalab.com.**

ELECTRO HARMONIX

The EHX Intelligent Harmony Machine instantly creates matching harmonies to what you play. It's like having one – or even two – guitarists jamming with you at the same time and always in perfect sync. The Intelligent Harmony Machine opens a door multi-part harmonized solos. Of course, it also boasts EHX's renowned impeccable tracking and genuine musical tone. **www.ehx.com**

MASTRO VALVOLA

The OFF1 pedal features 3 analog stand-alone circuits in series: Octave + Fuzz + Ladder Filter. Octave and Fuzz can be used individually while in combination, more experimental results can be obtained. By applying the Fuzz's high octave and Filter on the low octaves you get out of the ordinary sounds and are projected towards moods close to the world of synths. **www.mastrovalvola.it**

TECH 21

The SansAmp Section of the Fly Rig 5 v2 can get nice and dirty by using the Drive control, Boost function, or Plexi/Cali section. Or all three achieving different tones. Other features include 3-band EQ, switchable Tap Tempo Delay; independent reverb; effect loop, chromatic tuner, and XLR Output. Run directly into DAWs, mixers/PA systems, or with an existing amp. **www.tech21nyc.com**

ROCKN STOMPN LLC MODEL RS-4

Looks like a power strip, but it is really a state of art, power management system, multimode power sequencer with EMI/RFI noise filtering power conditioner and surge protection. **www.rocknstompn.com**

CARVIN

The MACH100 100W (50W/50W) Stereo Pedal Amplifier is designed for the modern guitarist who wants a compact high output amplifier that fits right on the pedal board. Use the stereo 2 channel amplifier to drive two guitar cabinets with 16, 8 or 4 ohm impedance. Step up to the next level of compact amplification today. **www.carvin.com**

MAESTRO

The Maestro Discoverer Delay is a modern analog delay pedal that utilizes legendary analog bucket brigade device (BBD) technology to deliver classic, warm, and inviting delay sounds. An intuitive 3-knob layout lets users quickly dial up length of Delay time (from 20 ms to 600 ms), amount of Sustain (delay repeats), and adjust the level of the delays in the Mix. **www.maestroelectronics.com**

MESA BOOGIE

The Mesa/Boogie Gold Mine tops the gain spectrum with soaring, smooth high gain that's borderline Brit in character. Dial the gain back for sweet, subtle overdrive or experience the Gold Mine's full wealth of character as the gain goes up. A violin-like quality infuses single notes with saturation that blends attack and sustain with near perfection in pedal form. **www.mesaboogie.com**

J ROCKETT AUDIO DESIGNS

The Dude is a faithful recreation of the Dumble Overdrive Special tone designed by analyzing the actual legendary amplifier. The Dude features amp-like sensitivity, chewiness, and the gain that only a Dumble can create. This pedal sings with all types of guitars and is perfect for blues, fusion, rock and so much more. **https://rockettpedals.com/product/the-dude-v2**

GODLYKE DISTRIBUTING, INC.

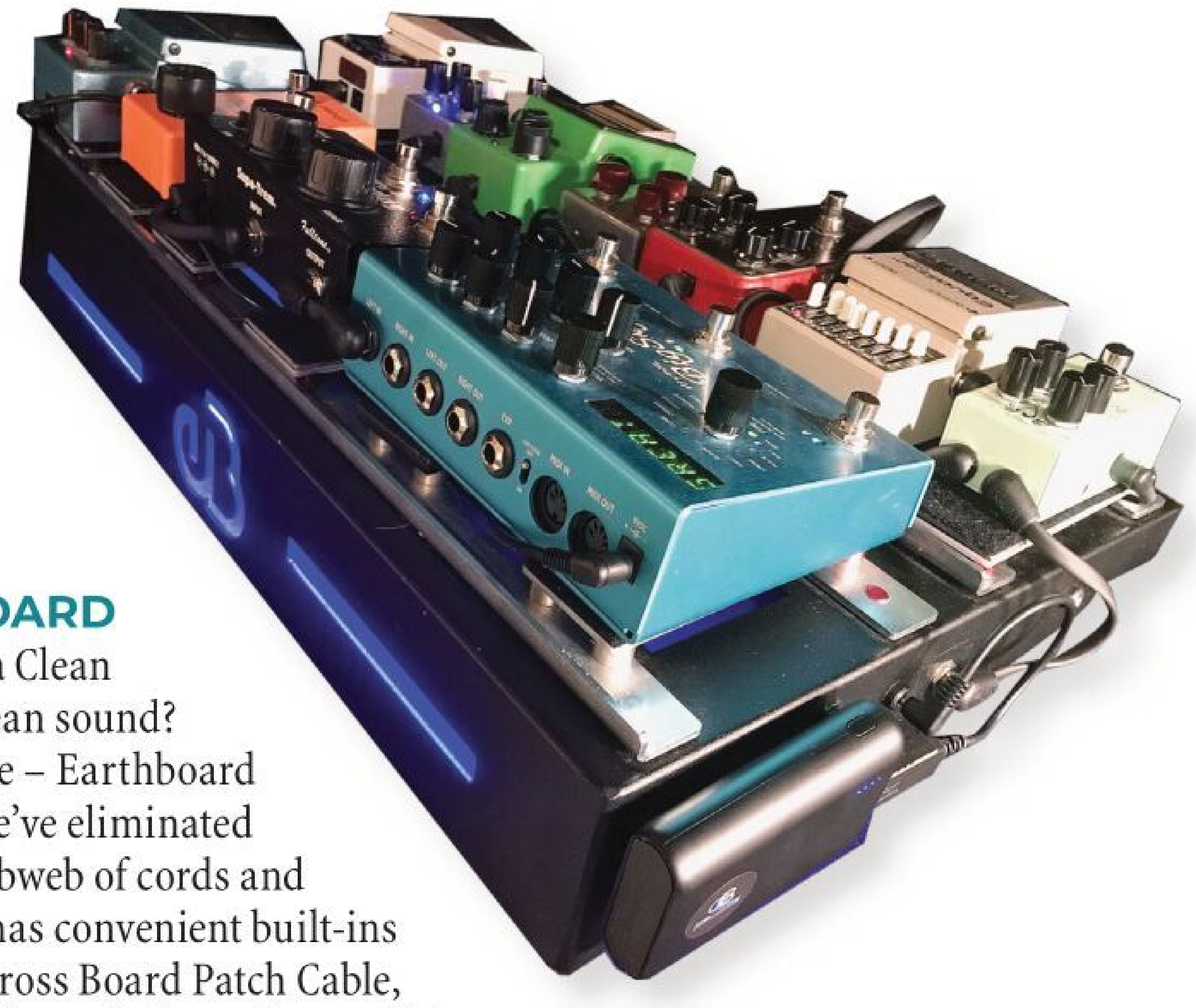
The legendary overdrive, modified by the engineer who designed it! After meticulous study of hundreds of 808's, Susumu Tamura has developed a mod that captures the full-bodied harmonic range & incredible dynamics of the best vintage TubeScreamers. Featuring the "magic" IC only found in certain vintage models as well as NOS Toshiba diodes, the TS808-TM is the ultimate overdrive! Street Price – $349. **www.godlyke.com**

MAESTRO

The Maestro Comet Chorus pedal uses iconic analog bucket brigade device (BBD) technology to deliver warm, classic chorus tones. This all-analog pedal boasts a Mode toggle switch for increased sonic versatility. The Earth mode provides an optimized, shimmering chorus effect. The Orbit mode adds some amplitude modulation to the chorused sound to accurately simulate the sonic complexities of a rotary speaker. **www.maestroelectronics.com**

MAYFLY AUDIO SYSTEMS, LTD

The Mayfly Sketchy Zebra is a 6-stage vibrato/phase shifter with a huge range of spacey sounds. Controls include Speed, Feedback, and Manual. Foot-switchable vibrato mode. Internal trim pots set volume of phase and vibrato effects. Full bypass using relays. Mayfly's lineup also includes the Open Window (Overdrive), Dirty Window (Distortion), and the Bytown Boost (Clean Boost). **www.mayflyaudio.com/music_creation**



EARTHBOARD

Looking for a Clean rig with a Clean sound? Look no more – Earthboard is for you! We've eliminated the messy cobweb of cords and Earthboard has convenient built-ins such as the Cross Board Patch Cable, I/O jacks, and LED lights. All you add is pedals! Order now and get 25% off your order – use code VG25. **https://earthboardmusic.com/shop**

JANGLEBOX LLC

JangleBox LLC manufactures handmade guitar pedal effects based on a foundation of innovative sound, simplicity, and quality build. The pedals we make are acclaimed as exceptional. JangleBox pedals are used by world-renowned recording artists and inspired amateur guitarists alike. Guitar legend Roger McGuinn said about the original JangleBox, "These are the pedals that everyone has been looking for." **www.janglebox.com**

TONE. ELECTRONICS

The Animalizzer was conceived, born, raised and nourished in Figueira da Foz in Portugal. It is completely adjustable with its dual clipping and equalization It's quite simply the most tweakable, flexible, twisted, and monstrous Fuzz! handmade, one by one. **www.txpedals.com**

MG MUSIC

If you throw King Crimson's *Red* and Primus's *Pork Soda* records in the same basket then added a more records like Miles Davis's *On The Corner*, Parliament's *Chocolate City*, plus Frank Zappa's *Overnite Sensation* you have the Sound Ingredients from our Parliament Envelope FIlterfuzz Octave Down, a long long name because the variety of sounds you will have come out of your amplifier! **www.mgmusic.com.br**

MAESTRO

Inspired by the overdriven tones of some of the world's most cherished vintage tube amps, the Ranger Overdrive is a modern, all-analog overdrive pedal featuring a Mode toggle switch that provides two different tonalities; a warm, expressive, amp-like overdrive and a second tonality that's slightly cleaner and exceptionally touch-sensitive. A Classic 3-knob layout provides intuitive adjustment of Gain, Tone, and Output Level. **www.maestroelectronics.com**

MAESTRO

The Maestro Invader Distortion is a high-gain, all-analog modern distortion pedal with a heavy, aggressive, dominant sonic character and loads of rich harmonics for a wide range of distorted sounds. A 3-knob control layout gives users intuitive control over Gain, Tone, and Output Level. Users can also engage a built-in noise gate with the top panel toggle switch. **www.maestroelectronics.com**

KEELEY ELECTRONICS

Featuring Manhattan-style compression, the all-new Keeley Compressor Mini intuitively and automatically delivers the perfect blend of dynamic and compressed guitar signal. Transient Release Time and Automatic Tone Recovery is set to make your pickups sound lively and expressive. The Mini's legendary pre-amp tone pushes both pedals and amplifiers to their greatest potential. The Compressor Mini is your next secret weapon. **www.RobertKeeley.com**

TWA (TOTALLY WYCKED AUDIO)

The WX-01 Wahxidizer Envelope-Controlled Fuzz is inspired by the vintage Univox Super Fuzz with pronounced upper octave harmonic for octavia/ring-mod effects and footswitchable Fat/Scoop global EQ settings. It features a Parametric EQ with frequency select and cut/boost controls. Envelope function allows for control of EQ frequency via playing dynamics or expression pedal for a wide variety of fuzz/wah, swept filter and dirty envelope filter effects. Street Price – $249. **www.godlyke.com**

TWA (TOTALLY WYCKED AUDIO)

Based on the legendary Systech Harmonic Energizer used by Frank Zappa, the Triskelion Harmonic Energizer is a band-pass filter with adjustable frequency peak and massive amounts of gain. It can push an amp, boost levels for solos or fine-tune a rig for walls of resonant harmonic feedback. The TK-03 features expression control for frequency range and footswitchable gain boost. Street Price – $229. **www.godlyke.com**

CUSACK MUSIC

The Mojo Hand RVT was created to offer three popular on-board vintage amplifier effects in one compact enclosure. Take your old Tweed to the gig and now have Reverb, Vibrato, and Tremolo ready to go! Early '60s amplifiers were utilized in helping to voice this cost effective powerhouse, and you will be pleased with the results! **www.cusackmusic.com**

ELECTRO HARMONIX

For over 44 years the Deluxe Memory Man has been the gold standard for analog delay and modulation. Now it's available in an ultra-compact package! The Nano Deluxe Memory Man delivers EHX's signature bucket-brigade analog delay, chorus and vibrato plus some updates including both Rate and Depth knobs for enhanced modulation control, 9V operation, delay tails, and a compact chassis. **www.ehx.com** VG

Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

1964 Gibson SG Standard

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1971	Ace Tone Solid A-5 Amp	2x12 solid state	$140	$180
1982	Acoustic 165 Amp	All tube	$300	$390
1981	Acoustic 220 Bass Head	125/160 watts	$215	$280
1975	Acoustic 470 Amp Head	170 watts	$300	$390
1961	Alamo Small Tube Amp		$250	$325
1995	Alembic Essence 5 Bass		$2,125	$2,750
2000	Ampeg B-2 Bass Amp	200 watts, 1x15 or 4x12 combo, ss	$375	$500
2000	Ampeg B-50 R Rocket Bass Amp (reissue)		$250	$325
1963	Ampeg BB-5 Baby Bass (5-string)	Solid color	$2,525	$3,250
2000	Aria Solidbody model (various)		$600	$775
1962	Ariatone Model 810 Amp	12 watts, 1x8, trem, brown cover	$540	$700
1890	August Pollmann Royal Professional 5-String Banjo		$350	$475
1968	Baldwin Model 706 V (vibrato) Amp		$725	$950
1966	Baldwin Model D1 Deluxe (Professional) Amp	1x12 combo	$375	$485
2000	Bourgeois Slope D	Mahogany Adirondack	$3,100	$4,000
2015	Carr Raleigh Amp	3 watts, 1x10	$900	$1,200
1981	Charvel San Dimas Serialized Plated		$2,300	$3,000
1965	Danelectro DM-10 Amp	10 watts, 1x8	$285	$375
1955	Danelectro Model 72 (Series D) Centurion Amp	1x12	$525	$685
1957	D'Angelico New Yorker Deluxe (cutaway)	Sunburst	$36,000	$48,000
1960	D'Angelico Special (cutaway)	Sunburst	$8,500	$11,000
1988	D'Aquisto Jazz Special	2nd version	$19,000	$25,000
2010	Dean Soltero SL		$1,475	$1,950
1986	Dean Markley K-75 Amp		$58	$75
1920	Ditson Concert Style 3		$5,450	$7,150
1933	Dobro Model 37	Square neck	$1,800	$2,375
2011	Epiphone ES-175 Premium		$610	$785
2005	Epiphone Casino J.L. USA 1965	Made in USA	$2,050	$2,675
1950	Epiphone Emperor Regent	Sunburst	$5,200	$6,750
1965	Epiphone FT 30 Caballero		$650	$840
1943	Epiphone FT 79	Solid walnut back & sides	$2,275	$2,950
2011	Epiphone Les Paul Standard	Various colors	$355	$455
1966	Epiphone Wilshire	Standard color	$2,000	$2,600
1962	Epiphone Zenith		$875	$1,150
1970	Espana EL-31 (Electric Series)	3 pickups	$325	$425
1965	Excelsior Guitars Dyno II		$300	$400
1980	Fender 30 Amp	1x12 tubes	$465	$600
2000	Fender Acoustasonic 30 Amp	2 channel	$200	$260
1959	Fender Bandmaster Amp	Tweed, 3x10	$7,500	$9,700
1971	Fender Bantam Bass Amp	Assumes orig spk	$580	$750
2021	Fender FA-345CE (Fender Alternative)		$260	$335
1963	Fender Jazz Bass	Sunburst	$10,000	$13,000

Walter Carter with an 1899 Orville Gibson.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1974	Fender Precision Bass	Walnut	$2,300	$3,000
1958	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst 2-tone, maple	$33,700	$43,800
1979	Fender Stratocaster	Walnut	$2,150	$2,800
1998	Fender Stratocaster '50s/Classic Series '50s	CIJ (Japan)	$600	$800
1956	Fender Telecaster	Blond	$24,000	$31,000
2007	Fender '52 Telecaster	Blond	$1,450	$1,900
2017	Fender Telecaster American Professional	Solid state	$825	$1,075
2013	Fishman Loudbox Artist Pro-LBX-600 Amp	120 watts	$250	$325
2005	G & L JB-2 Bass		$950	$1,250
1946	Gibson BR-6 Amp	10 watts, 1x10 vertical cab	$560	$725
1963	Gibson EB-0 Bass	Cherry	$1,825	$2,350
1935	Gibson EH-150 Amp	1x10, 4 tubes	$1,175	$1,525
1950	Gibson ES-150	P-90	$2,000	$2,600
1952	Gibson ES-5	Sunburst, 3 P-90s	$6,400	$8,300
1957	Gibson GA-400 Super 400 Amp	60 watts, 2x12, 3-chn	$2,000	$2,600
1960	Gibson J-50	Round shoulders	$3,850	$5,000
1977	Gibson Les Paul 55	Sunburst	$1,700	$2,200
2008	Gibson Les Paul '60 Plaintop (VOS)		$2,600	$3,400
2001	Gibson Les Paul Classic	Various colors, plain top	$1,575	$2,050
1959	Gibson Les Paul Custom	Stoptail	$61,000	$79,000
1956	Gibson Les Paul Model	Tune-o-matic tailpiece	$39,000	$51,000
1959	Gibson Les Paul Standard (Sunburst)	Highly figured	$350,000	$455,000
1971	Gibson Les Paul Triumph/Recording Bass		$1,475	$1,900
1975	Gibson Marauder	Bolt-on	$975	$1,275
1964	Gibson SG Standard	Cherry, small guard, Bigsby	$13,700	$17,700
2011	Gilchrist Model 5 Mandolin		$18,500	$24,000
1981	Givens A-3 Mandolin		$2,900	$3,700
1986	Gold Star GF-85 5-String Banjo		$1,350	$1,800
1968	Gretsch Monkees		$2,800	$3,700
1955	Gretsch Streamliner Model 6189 Single Cutaway	Jaguar tan	$2,300	$3,000
1991	Guild Bluegrass D-25/D-25M		$640	$835
1979	Guild Bluegrass Jubilee D-40	Mahogany	$1,400	$1,800
1985	Guild Starfire IV		$1,850	$2,250
1993	Hamer Archtop P-90		$1,050	$1,350
1985	Hamer Blitz Bass	All-on-a-side tuners	$1,550	$2,000
1984	Hamer Special	With Floyd Rose	$1,550	$2,025
1985	Hohner Panther P-12 Amp		$70	$92
1982	Ibanez MC Musician Series Bass	Various	$800	$1,400

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The following guitar dealers take part in the *Vintage Guitar* price survey. Their input is one of the research tools used by *Vintage Guitar.*

Brian Goff
Bizarre Guitars

Garrett Tung
Boingosaurus Music

Dave Belzer
Burst Brothers

Walter Carter
Carter Vintage

Daniel Escauriza
Chicago Music Exchange

John Majdalani
Cream City Music

Dave Rogers
Dave's Guitar Shop

David Davidson and Paige Davidson
Davidson's Well Strung Guitars

Drew Berlin
Drew Berlin's Vintage Guitars

Stan Werbin & S.J. "Frog" Forgey
Elderly Instruments

Dewey Bowen
Freedom Guitar

Rick Hogue
Garrett Park Guitars

Gary Dick
Gary's Classic Guitars

Eric Newell
Gruhn Guitars

Richard Johnston
Gryphon Strings

Kennard Machol & Leonard Coulson
Intermountain Guitar & Banjo

Jim Singleton
Jim's Guitars

Kevin Borden
Kebo's BassWorks

Dave Hinson
Killer Vintage

Timm Kummer
Kummer's Vintage Instruments

Buzzy Levine
Lark Street Music

Larry Wexer
Laurence Wexer, Ltd.

Artie Leider
McKenzie River Music

Neal Shelton
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Lowell Levinger
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Howie Statland
Rivington Guitars

Eliot Michael
Rumble Seat Music

Sammy Ash
Sam Ash Music Stores

Eric Schoenberg
Schoenberg Guitars

Richard Gellis
Union Grove Music

Fred Oster
Vintage Instruments

Richard Friedman
We Buy Guitars

Nate Westgor
Willie's American Guitars

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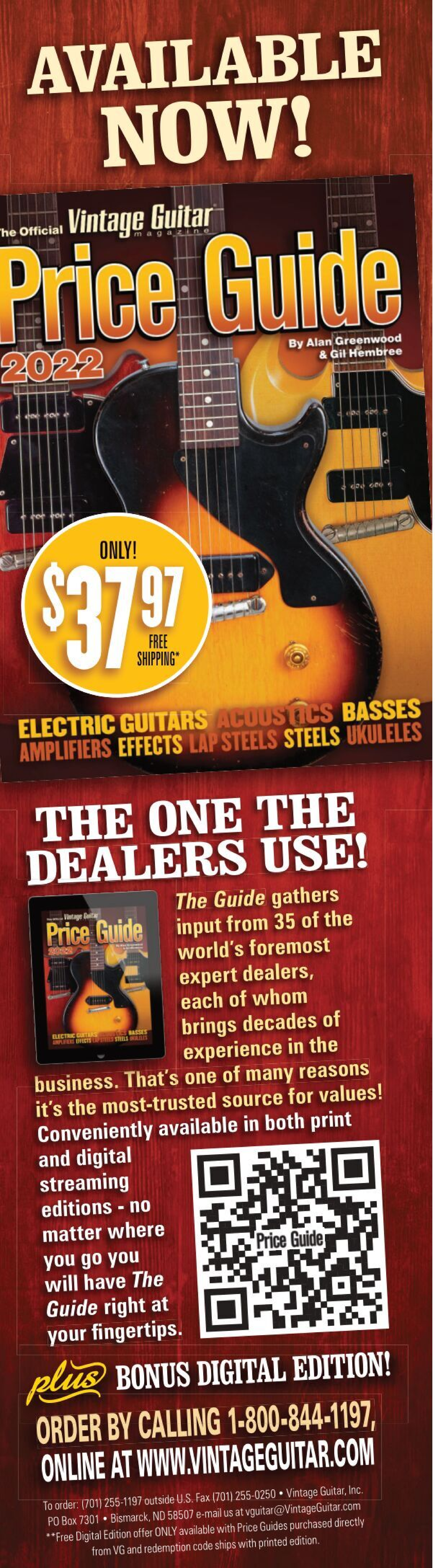

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1968	Idol Hobby 100 Amp		$190	$250
1950	Kalamazoo KEA Amp	Oxblood	$440	$575
1965	Kalamazoo Reverb 12 Amp		$540	$70
1965	Kay K503, K504, K505 Amp Models		$355	$465
1979	Kramer 650-B Artist Bass		$1,250	$1,625
1984	Lab Series B120 Amp	120 watts, 1x15, ss combo	$275	$365
1998	Lakland 4 - 94 Classic Bass		$1,800	$2,300
1955	Magnatone Model 109 Melodier Deluxe Amp	10 watts, 2 speakers	$650	$850
1959	Magnatone Model 280A Amp	50 watts, 2x12+2	$1,500	$2,000
1995	Marshall Model 8240 Valvestate Stereo Chorus Amp	Hybrid 80 watts (dual 40)	$220	$290
1971	Martin 0-18	400 made	$2,100	$2,700
1929	Martin 0-18T		$1,850	$2,400
1931	Martin 0-28 K	Steel	$9,100	$11,800
1903	Martin 0-42	18 made	$11,000	$14,300
1960	Martin D-28E	1 made	$6,000	$7,800
2010	Martin D-35		$1,925	$2,525
1960	Martin Model 112 Amp	1x12 tube combo	$3,000	$4,000
1998	Matchless Brave 40 112 Amp		$1,350	$1,750
1997	Matchless Hurricane Amp Head		$1,100	$1,450
2007	Mesa-Boogie Express 5:50 Amp	2x12, 5-50 watts	$875	$1,125
2005	Mesa-Boogie Lonestar Special Amp	10/50/100 watts, 1x12 combo	$1,275	$1,650
1936	National Style O	Square neck, rare etching	$2,275	$2,950
1937	National Triolian	Fake rosewood grain	$2,500	$3,300
1953	Newcomb Model G 12 Amp	1x12, 2 knobs	$365	$475
1915	Orpheum Model #3 Tenor Banjo		$800	$1,075
1970	Ovation Typhoon II Bass		$725	$950
1977	Ovation Viper 1271		$650	$850
1930	Paramount Aristocrat Plectrum Banjo		$1,275	$1,650
1979	Park Model 1229 100-Watt Head		$1,825	$2,350
2000	Peavey 5150 212 Combo Amp	2x12 combo	$490	$630
1999	Peavey Classic 30 Amp	Narrow panel sq. grille	$365	$465
1961	Premier Model 71 Amp	Round baffle	$925	$1,200
1976	Ramirez Flamenco		$2,550	$3,375
1956	Rickenbacker Hi Fi Model 98 Amp		$1,200	$1,550
1972	Rickenbacker Model 4001 Bass	Various colors	$3,500	$4,500
1979	Rickenbacker Model 4003 Bass		$1,550	$2,000
1999	Roland AC-90 (Acoustic Chorus) Amp		$355	$465
1977	S. D. Curlee Electric Solidbody		$355	$465
1963	Selmer Futurama Corvette Amp	1x8, 4 tubes	$875	$1,125
1949	Stromberg Master 400 Cutaway	1 brace, Natural, cutaway	$45,000	$65,000
1953	Supro Ozark	White pearloid	$950	$1,225
2002	Taylor AB2 Bass		$1,650	$2,125
2019	Taylor Academy 12e		$385	$500
1925	Vega Little Wonder Mandolin Banjo		$350	$450
1922	Vega Style M Tubaphone TR Banjo		$850	$1,100
1920	Vega Tubaphone #3 5-String Banjo		$1,800	$2,700
1966	Vox Phantom VI	Italian-made	$1,700	$2,225
1984	Wal Custom (IV) Mark I Bass		$5,400	$7,000
1922	Weymann Banjo Harp (wood top) Tenor		$1,300	$1,700

Grammy winner Micki Free
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"Sexy...Killer Tone and Everything
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Johnny Meeks (left) with his '57 "Mary Kaye" Strat along with Max Lipscomb (a.k.a. Scotty McKay), Gene Vincent, and Bobby Jones after Leo Fender gave them matching instruments and at least one tweed Twin.

JOHNNY MEEKS

Rock-and-Roll Guitar Pioneer

By Wolf Marshall

In the 1950s, "rock" music was a melange of blues, country, and hillbilly that also snared elements from boogie-woogie, gospel, Western swing, doo-wop, and prototype R&B. Called "rockabilly," its emissaries were Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Eddie Cochran, Buddy Holly, and Gene Vincent & His Blue Caps.

The music may have been an amalgam, but the attitude was single-minded. Though the term was yet to be coined, rock and roll was the mindset emblazoned in Bill Haley's 1954 hits "Rock Around the Clock" and "Shake, Rattle and Roll." After Elvis cut his Sun sessions that same year, a movement began as songs by Chuck Berry, Perkins, Vincent, Holly, Cochran, and Ricky Nelson continued to assault the pop charts.

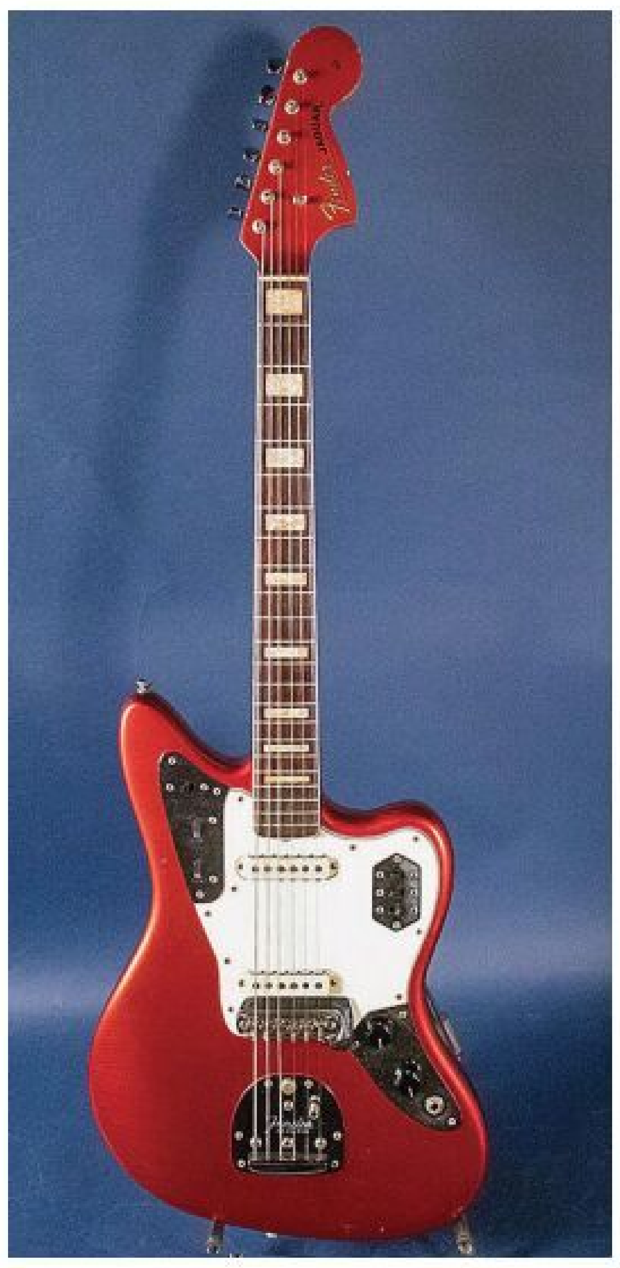
Guitar was central to the rise of rock and roll. But *which* guitar? Danny Cedrone, Scotty Moore, Berry, and Cochran brandished hollowbody archtop Gibsons and Gretsches, Paul Burlison and James Burton preferred Telecasters, Perkins vacillated between an ES-5, Les Paul, and Tele, while Cliff Gallup played a Duo-Jet. Johnny Meeks was a devoted Stratocaster player when he appeared with Vincent in '57, making him perhaps the earliest rock musician (along with Holly) to embrace the new instrument. Regional factors considered, Holly probably acquired his '54 Strat in Lubbock the following year, but didn't venture to Nashville with it until '56, while Meeks was playing a Strat before Vincent hired him in early '57. Either way, the mythos of the Strat in rock and roll begins here.

Johnny Meeks was born April 16, 1937, in Gaffney, South Carolina, and grew up in Laurens. Bred on country music, he was a favorite local singer/guitarist who played his first song on WLBG radio and generated considerable mystique with his unusual three-neck electric guitar (four-string mando, six- and 12-string guitars) made by Pee Wee Melton. He was a member of Country Earl and the Circle E Ranch Gang, which packed venues in the Greenville area while maintaining a large following with their WESC radio program and weekly TV show in Asheville. Earl and Blue Caps guitarist Paul Peek recommended Meeks to Gene Vincent after Gallup's departure, and he joined in time to perform on "The Ed Sullivan Show" and at jamborees in the Ozarks, Dallas, and Los Angeles, appear in the 1957 movie *Hot Rod Gang*, and tour internationally.

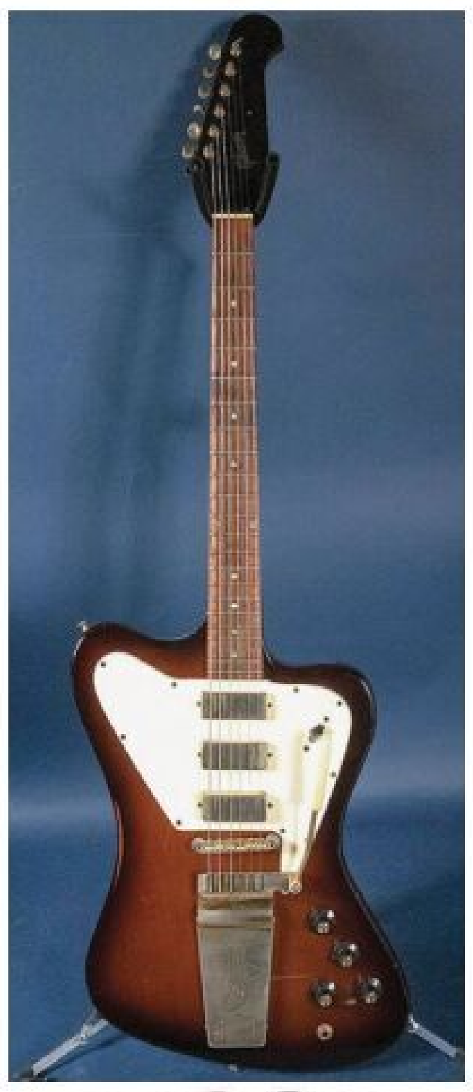
His recording debut with Vincent took place at the Capitol Tower Studio, Hollywood, on June 19, 1957. Meeks' playing graces an influential period in Vincent's career, marked by "Lotta Lovin'," Vincent's only Top 20 hit (#13 in September of '57) apart from "Be-Bop-A-Lula," "Dance to the Bop" (#23 January '58) and the album *Gene Vincent Rocks!*. Meeks composed the classic "Say Mama" before leaving Vincent's band in October of '58 and relocating to Los Angeles, where he remained on and off for 30 years. He formed the Tune Toppers, performed regularly at nightclubs including with the

WILLIE'S AMERICAN GUITARS

Epic Guitar Romances



1967 Fender Jaguar In vibrant factory Candy Apple Red (based on it's unique glow, probably a gold undercoat), with matching headstock, bound rosewood board, and pearl blocks - a truly sexy combination in a late '60s offset-bodied Fender. This one is all-original and very clean, with just a bit of wear and finish checking, functional mute (you may be the first to ever use that feature) and comes in its original case with trem arm. **$9,500**



1968 Gibson Firebird VII Sunburst, non-reverse variation, factory gold parts including strip Klusons, mini-humbucker covers, and lyre-tailpiece Maestro vibrola. This replaced the Les Paul Custom for the most expensive solidbody in the '60s Gibson catalog lineup. There were only 19 of these Firebird VIIs shipped in 1968. Rare, striking, and a great-sounding guitar. Made in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Comes in its original hard case. **$9,995**

1937 Martin F-7 Archtop Sunburst, spruce top, Brazilian back and sides, seven-layer top and back ivoroid binding, ivoroid bound neck and headstock. All stock and clean. Style 45 backstripe, ebony fingerboard with pearl hexagon inlays. Vertical pearl CF Martin headstock inlay. A stunning example of a very rare Martin. Original bridge and tailpiece, pickguard might be repro but if so it's top-notch. Original case (broken handle). **$9,500**

1978 Gibson Les Paul Standard Very scarce factory natural finish – none listed in the famous Gibson shipping totals book, but they did in fact make a few. Non-sandwich Honduran mahogany body, 3-piece maple neck with volute, a pair of "patent stamp" humbuckers dated to 1978, neck pickup cavity has inked "natural" stamp. A "Laverne & Shirley"-era vision in blonde maple and walnut mahogany. Comes in its original hard case. **$6,500**

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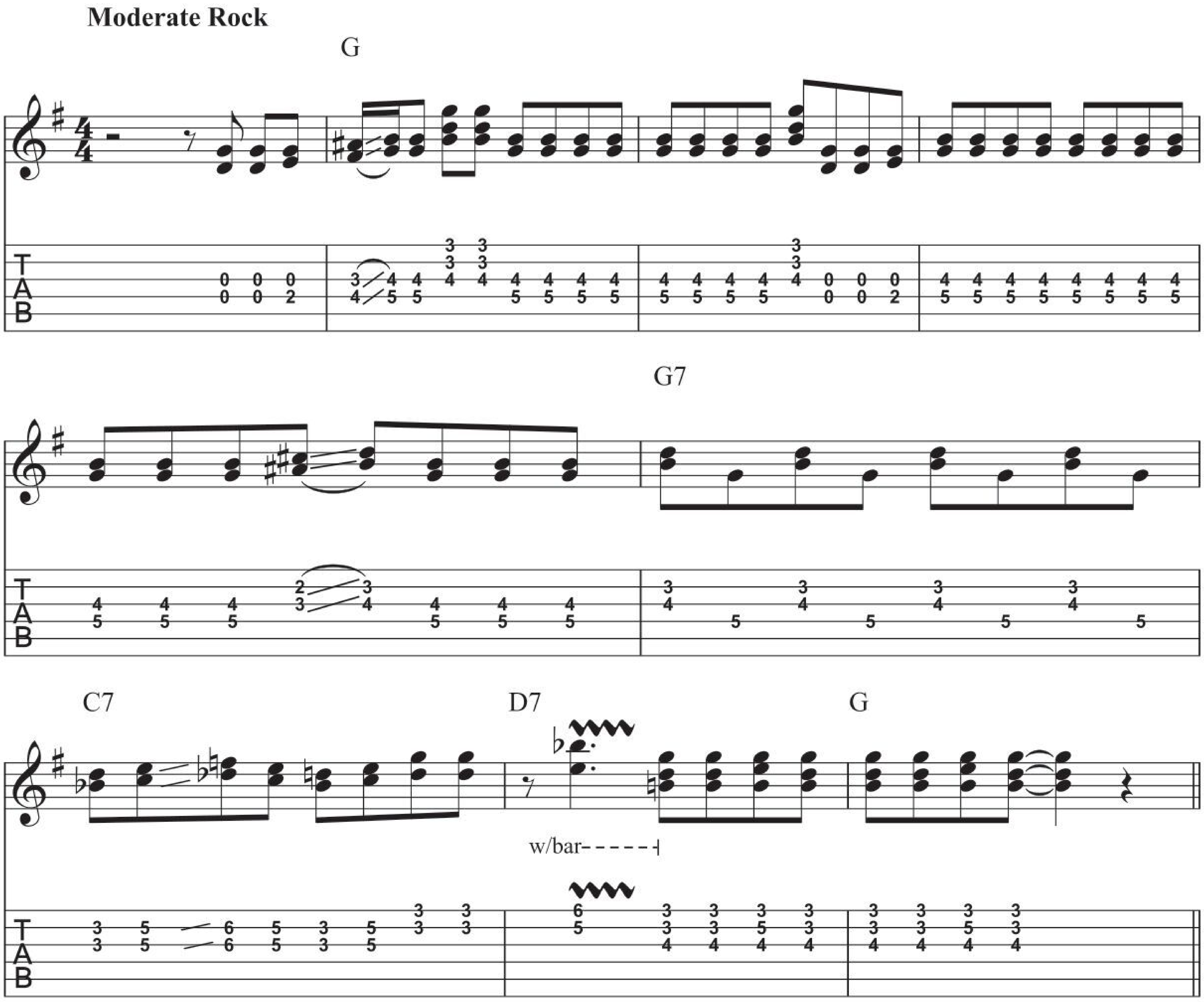
house band at the Palomino, and occasionally engaged in studio work. In '59/'60, he played guitar on The Champs' "Red Eye" (the instrumental B-side "The Little Matador" is his composition), toured with swamp pop R&B teenage idol Jimmy Clanton, and appeared in two feature films, *The Fine Young Cannibals* and *Roustabout* (Elvis Presley).

In '69, he formed Johnny Meeks and the Detours with famed pedal-steel player Red Rhodes, which recording tracks for the Custom label that addressed the burgeoning "California country" movement and rock-influenced honky-tonk music of the era.

Meeks reunited briefly with Vincent on *I'm Back and I'm Proud*, which presented an updated version of Vincent's sound fueled by Meeks' Strat twang with Rhodes' steel work and enhanced by contributions from Mars Bonfire (Steppenwolf), Skip Battin (Byrds), John Sebastian (Lovin' Spoonful), and newcomer Linda Ronstadt. Afterward, he freelanced with Michael Nesmith (*Tantamount to Treason*), Leroy Van Dyke, Lynn Anderson, Bob Luman, Leona Williams, and others. He worked briefly as pianist in the house band at Las Vegas' Silver Dollar Club before securing the lead-guitar position with Merle Haggard's band, the Strangers, where he was both sideman and frontman. He played on several Haggard hits in the '70s, appeared on Hag's Leavenworth TV special, and at the last live Country Music Awards show in Nashville's Ryman Auditorium.

As the rockabilly resurgence gained momentum, in '82 he reunited with members of Vincent's band for *Blue Caps Unleashed*, which included "I Lost an Angel," a previously unissued song co-written with Vincent. A longtime member of the Rockabilly Hall of Fame, Meeks was inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a Blue Cap in 2012. He was 78 when he died in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on July 30, 2015.



"Lotta Love" introduced fans to Johnny Meeks. Gene Vincent's first hit single after "Be-Bop-A-Lula," it's a mid-tempo number embodying the blues-based I-IV-V harmony of early rock. Meeks responded with a succinct signature solo made of blues, R&B, and country elements. To establish the aggressive rhythmic nature of his improvisations, he begins with double-stops and chord partials; note the chromatic "push" chords in measures 2 and 5 of the otherwise triadic figures and telling use of a major-sixth tone (E) indigenous to Western swing. He plays blues-scale double-stops over C7 for an idiomatic minorizing blues move in 7 (the characteristic $D^{\flat}$ tension in the pattern). In 8, he employs the Strat's vibrato to shake the E-$B^{\flat}$ tritone (another blues staple) over D7, and closes with a G-G6 pattern common to R&B

INFLUENCES

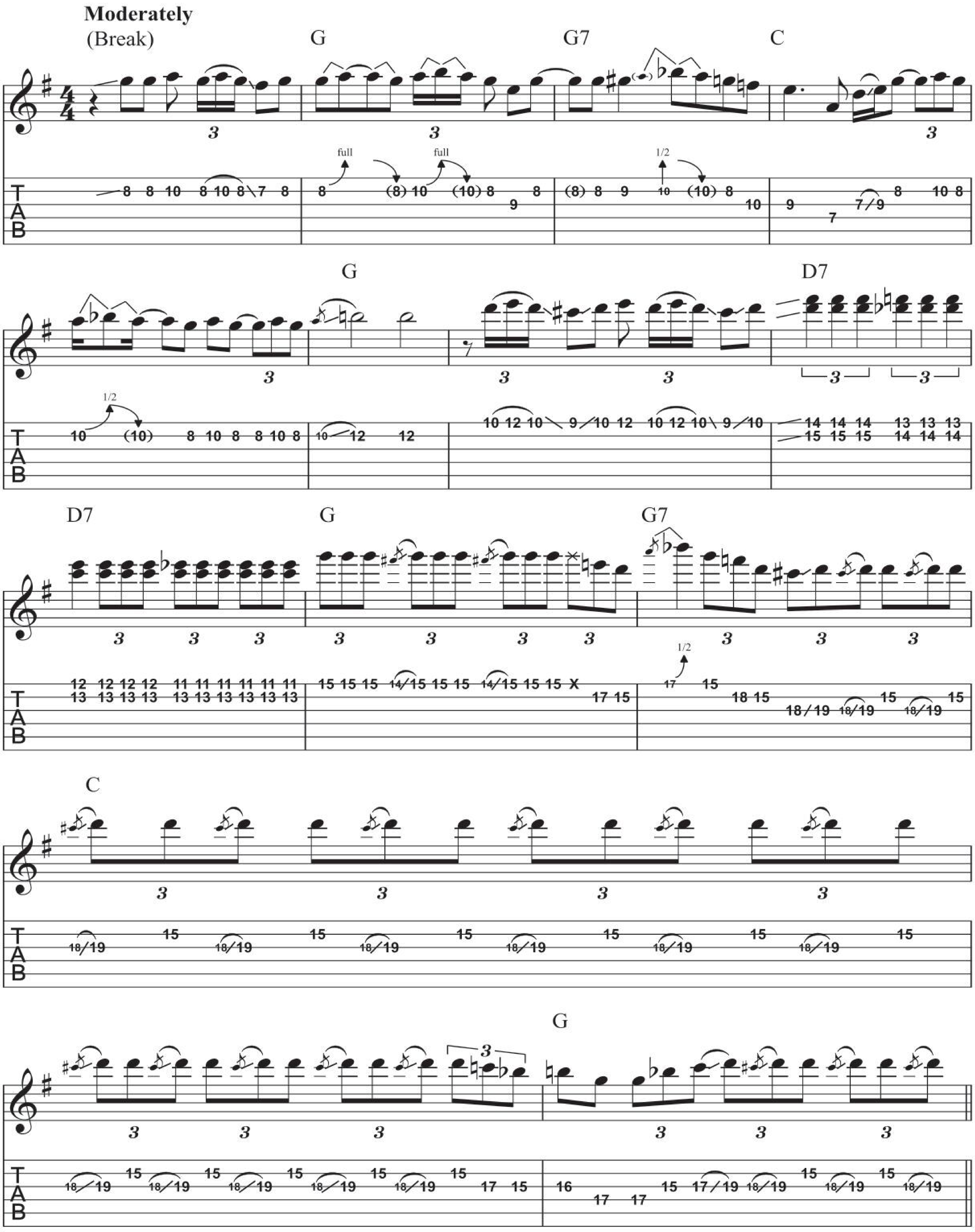
Meeks cited Chet Atkins, Chuck Berry, B.B. King and "all the blues players" as role models. The latter includes T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Lightnin' Hopkins and Elmore James – an amalgam consistent with early rock and roll guitarists.

STYLE

Though they shared influences and played divergent styles, rockabilly authority Brian Setzer has noted that early rock musicians were subject to regional conditions and existed in separate orbits, which explains the common aesthetic thread as well as differences running through Presley and Perkins in Memphis, Berry in St. Louis, Vincent in Norfolk, Holly in Texas, and Cochran and Nelson in Los Angeles. Each developed a unique approach to the incipient genre, accompanied by an artistically intertwined guitar sound.

Meeks' style was crafted from country, blues, and pop ingredients. He favored spontaneity over technique and prided himself on not practicing or rehearsing. A prime example of Setzer's regionality theory, he derived unique conclusions in his conception of rock-and-roll guitar – more economical and commercial, yet traditional and with cleaner/brighter tone compared to Blue Caps predecessor Cliff Gallup.

"Gallup was more advanced, a very precise player," he told *Guitar Player* in December



of 1983. "But I had that driving teenage sound that Gene liked." This is exemplified by his propulsive rhythm work and soloing on "Lotta Lovin'."

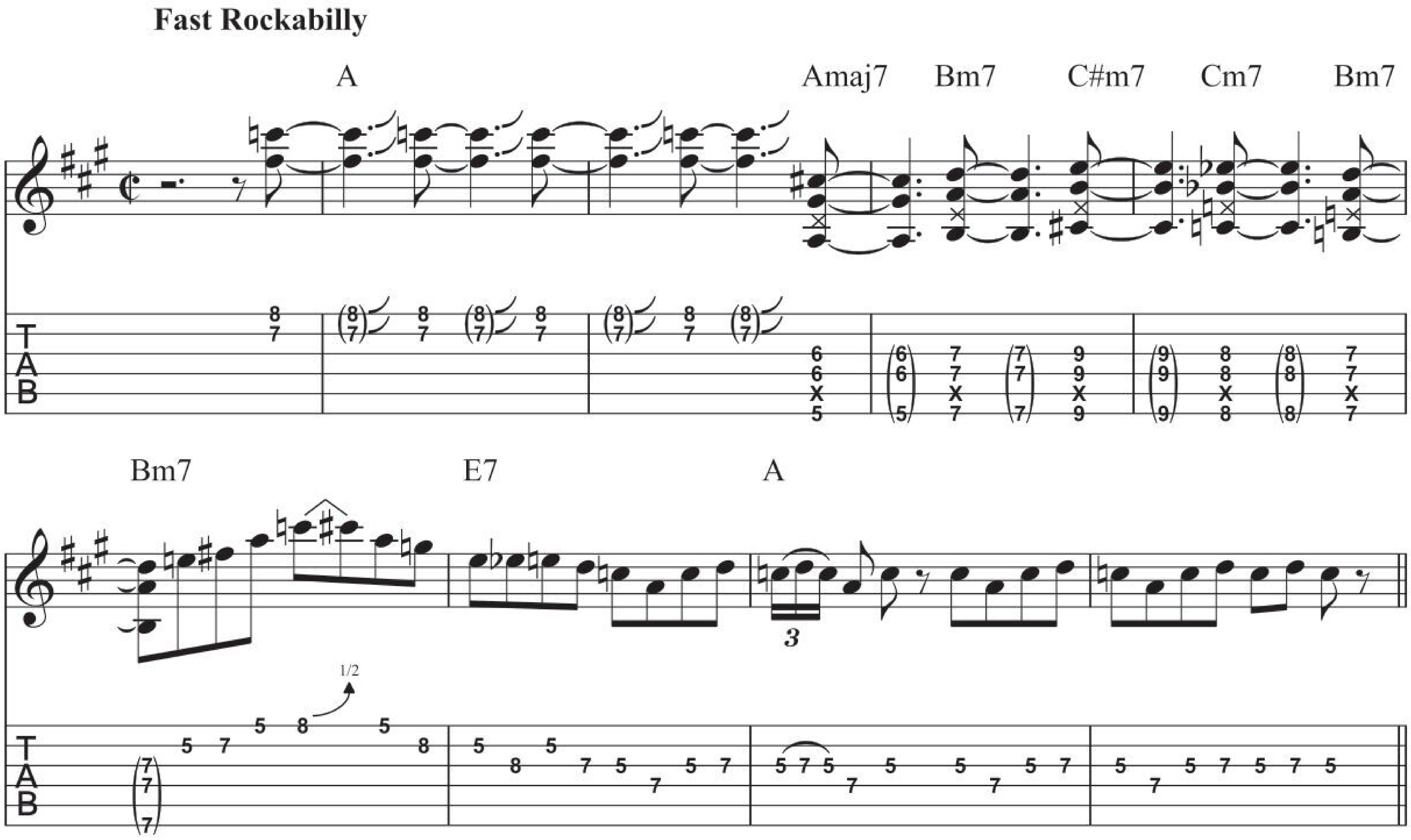
Initially, he strived to emulate Gallup's country/jazz phrases, but was directed (by Vincent) to play his own style, which consisted of reconfigured Chuck Berry double-stops, simple string bends delivered rhythmically, idiomatic blues licks turned into catchy rock patterns and musical hooks, and various pop and country elements such as parallel third and sixth lines, triad-based chord phrases, and arpeggiations. His articulation involved flatpicking as well as hybrid picking, and he occasionally capoed his Strat, as on "High Blood Pressure."

Meeks' rhythm parts were similarly streamlined but effective. He addressed the standard I-IV-V changes of rock and roll with conviction, relying on full and partial barre chords rendered in straight-eighth grooves, punctuating lead-rhythm fills, boogie-woogie bassline figures, and single-note R&B background riffs as heard in "Git It." He occasionally accessed jazz harmony in the form of dominant 9th and 6/9 sonorities as sophisticated ending chords or the unexpected passing-chord pattern heard in the second solo of "Flea Brain." At crucial moments, he supplied transformative guitar parts to otherwise mundane crooner ballads such as "Wear My Ring" – check out his bluesy chord intro, signature tremolo-picked

"The Wayward Wind" flaunts a finely textured Meeks solo that blends pop, balladic country, light jazz, rock, and blues. His opening line, played through the break, is an elegant diatonic melody decorated with a signature trill. In measure 2, he begins a solo with melodic blues sounds over G and adds a telling G♯ passing tone and half-step bend in 3 to intensify the tension of G7. He mixes major and minor sounds in 4-6 over C; note the presence of that emblematic major-sixth tone (A) in the phrase. In measure 7, he alludes to the jazz influence of Django Reinhardt, Les Paul, and Chet Atkins in his G major melody that incorporates a colorful C♯ neighbor tone. Note the embellishing trills in the passage applied in the manner of his jazz forebears. The parallel-thirds dyads in 8-9 reflect pop and country origins. Note the chromatic motion within the phrase. In the second half of his solo, Meeks adopts a more-driving rock-and-roll approach, beginning with emphatic repeated notes in triplets in 10. Check out his repurposed unison blues licks in 12-13 over C; again exploiting repeated notes and triplet figures, which rhythmically displace the simple Berry-inspired ideas. His cadence line (C-G) in 13-14, applies minor and major pentatonic sounds straight out of the Chicago blues playbook.

lines, parallel-third licks, muted chord riffing, subtle vibrato-bar embellishments, and walking countermelodies. Likewise, he employed percussive muted figures in the verses to color the Elvis re-tread "Look What You've Gone and Done" and unleashed a palette of sounds – decorative trills, chromaticism, bluesy bends, parallel thirds, Chuck Berry unison toggling riffs and more – in his well-balanced solo for "The Wayward Wind."

Though technically simpler, his style was more malleable than many of his contemporaries; "Little Lover" channeled Buddy Holly's melodic sensibilities, "Rocky Road Blues" alluded to Carl Perkins' tougher hillbilly-rock style, "Should I Ever Love Again" benefitted from a Jimmy Reed-informed Chicago-blues pedigree, and "White Lightning" took cues from James Burton's country/blues bent-and-picked flurries.



"Flea Brain" was definitive rockabilly, complete with slap-back echo. One of a handful of echo-laced Meeks moments in the Vincent catalog, its second solo (1:14) stretches beyond the traditional confines of rockabilly stated in the first. He merges blues and jazz in his opening thoughts, using a repeated tritone double-stop, bent slightly to underscore the syncopated rhythm in measures 1-2 answered by a jazz-inflected episode of parallel seventh chords (Gmaj7-Am7-C#m7-Cm7-Bm7), also in syncopated rhythm, in 3-4. By contrast, he plays the blues card in his final bars – exploiting major-blues sounds over Bm7-E7 in 5-6 and switching to simpler minor-pentatonic lines over A in 7-8.

Meeks' stinging minor-blues licks, modality, Latin feel and unmistakable Strat timbre on "Summertime" are definitive, stretching into areas explored by others in '60s rock songs like "Secret Agent Man" and "Pushing Too Hard." Throughout his career, he emphasized the Strat's unique tone colors and attributes, harnessing its inherent twang and applying whammy-bar shakes and dips prominently to "Lotta Lovin,'" "In the Pines," and "Red Eye," along with slow/narrow vibrato for a quasi-Hawaiian effect in "Time Will Bring You Everything," aggressive pitch changes and fast/wide vibrato in "Ruby Baby," "Lotta Lovin'" ('69 version), and "Be-Bop-A-Lula '69," and decorative bends to ending chords of many tunes, all harbingers of the whammy-bar heard in his '90s take on "Dance to the Bop."

Meeks' playing on "Dance in the Street" foreshadowed sounds that attained greater prominence in the instrumental rock/surf genres of the early '60s. Moreover, his Strat tone represented a significant step forward in rock-guitar sound, commensurate with the move from acoustic upright bass to electric solidbody bass in Vincent's band in '57.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Numerous classic Vincent albums feature Meeks' playing. Recommended are the compilation *Complete Recordings 1956-1964* and *Gene Vincent Rocks!*. A glimpse of his later style is heard on *I'm Back and I'm Proud.*

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

Several illuminating clips are posted online. Noteworthy are "Dance to the Bop" (November '57) with Meeks on a Gretsch 6120 hollowbody. "Be-Bop-A-Lula," "High Blood Pressure" and "Rip It Up" ("Town Hall Party," '58) find him wielding the signature white Strat. A rare '91 clip of "Dance to the Bop" reveals he also played G&L Fullertons later in his career.

SOUND

Unlike most rockabilly cats who preferred electric/acoustic archtops or other solidbodies, Meeks was playing a Strat and his Melton triple-neck when Vincent hired him. He briefly switched to a Gretsch 6120 at the leader's request, gravitating to its bridge pickup and adjusting the tone to achieve a brighter, Fender-like quality. In '57, he returned to his instrument of choice when Vincent and the Blue Caps received an official Fender endorsement – a rarity in the period – and Meeks' triple-neck became the singer's stage prop. Fender provided the band with a white Precision Bass, tweed amps, and three white "Mary Kaye" Strats, which, in retrospect, probably should have been called a "Johnny Meeks" Strat, as Kaye favored her D'Angelico at the time. The look and twang suited the dangerous, rougher side of Vincent's presentation, and its trebly, piercing quality remained a hallmark of Meeks' sound.

He played various Strats with maple and rosewood fretboards. Notable are a custom-color rosewood-board '59 used in The Champs, and his Dakota Red '65 with maple-cap board, as well as, later, the G&Ls. On early Vincent sessions, he used a tweed Twin amp and generally eschewed echo effects cultivated by rockabilly players, with the exception of "Flea Brain."

Special thanks to Deke Dickerson.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original editor-in-chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His books include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*, and a list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

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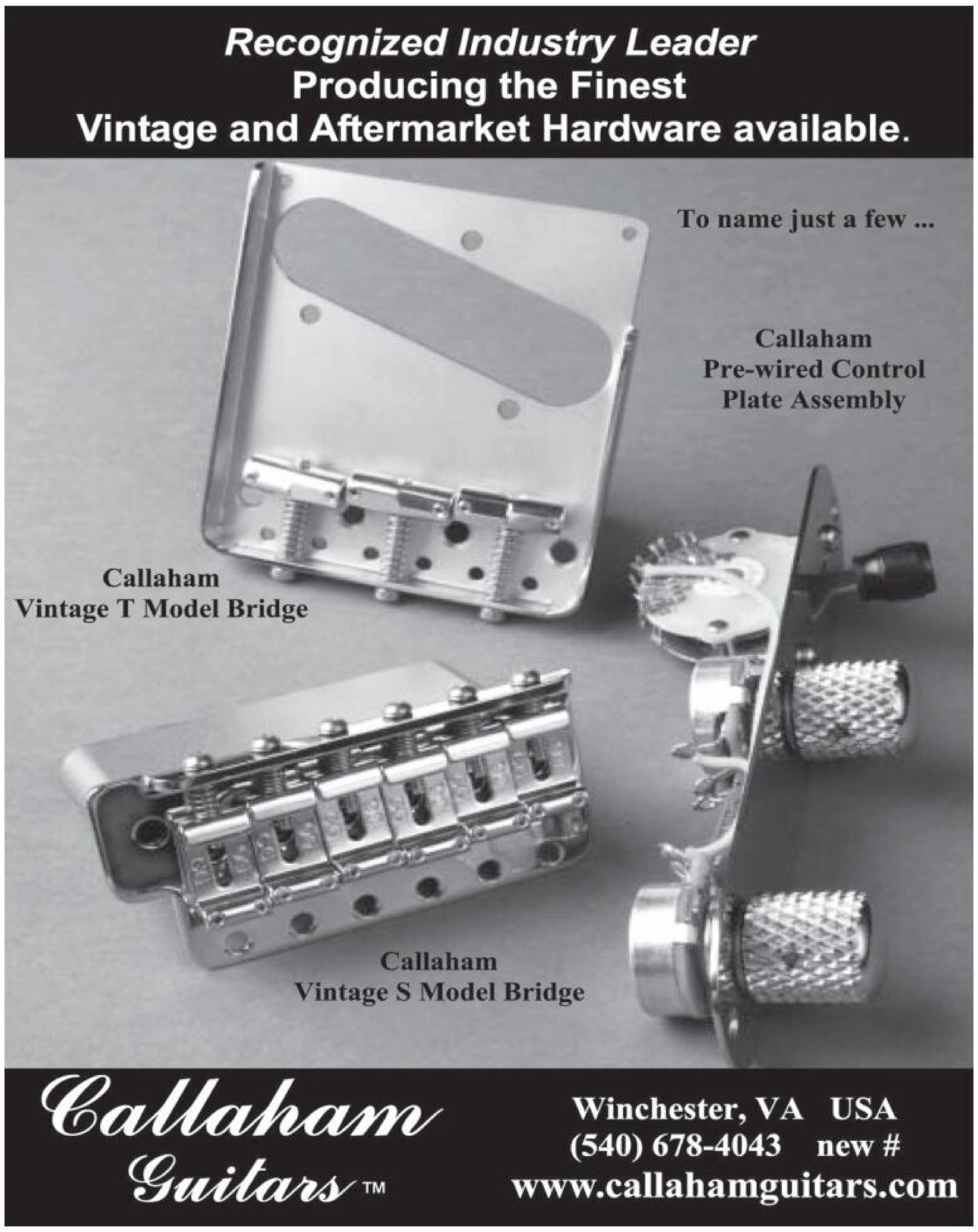
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UN-UNPLUGGED

Installing an Acoustic Pickup System

By Dan Erlewine

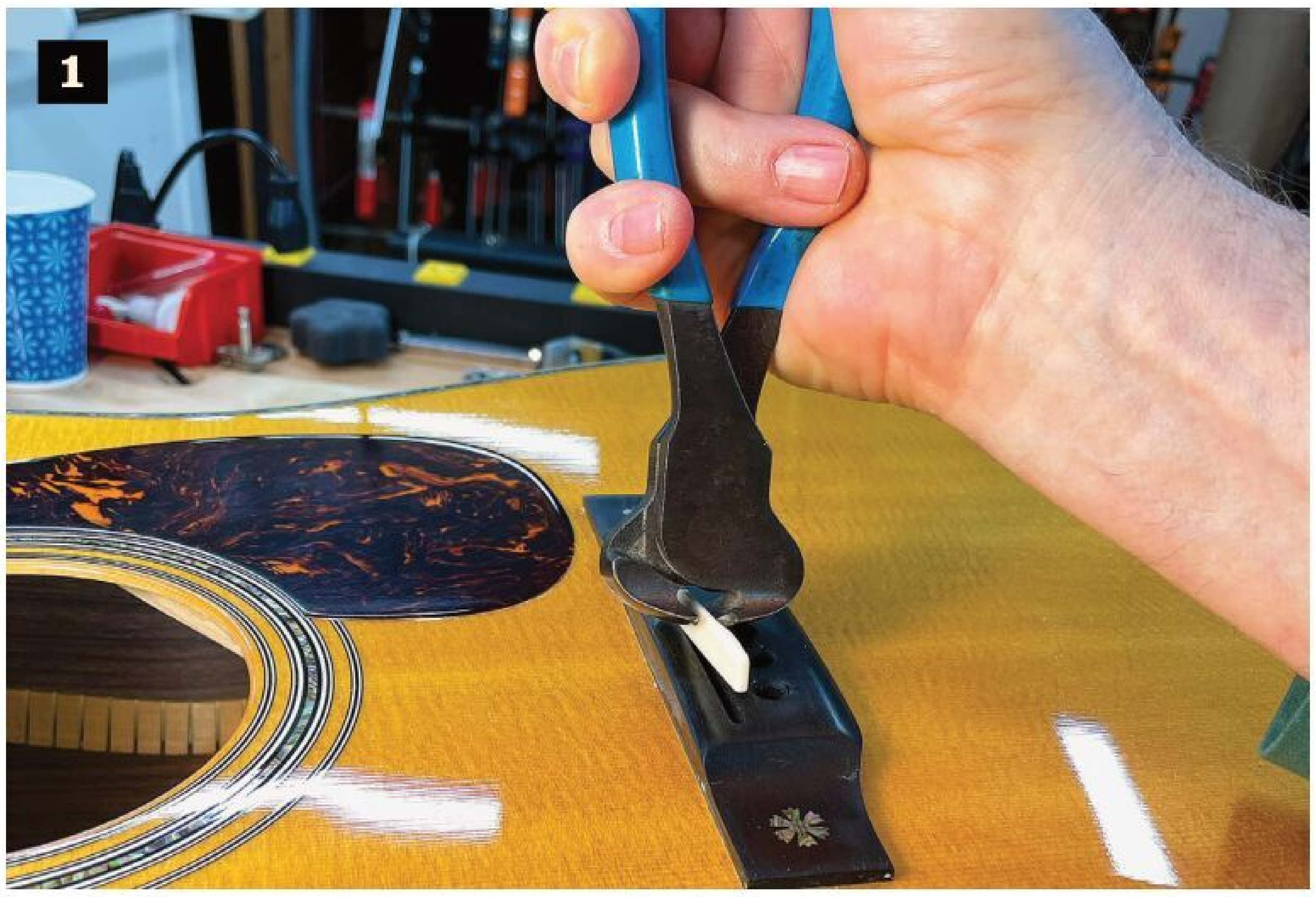
For years, one of the most common jobs I've been asked to do is put a pickup in an acoustic guitar. Compared to most of my work, it's pretty basic, and anyone with a modicum of DIY ability and proper tools could tackle even a modern acoustic-pickup system, which uses a piezo element under the bridge saddle along with a microphone on the bridge plate and a control for blending the two.

1) The system I'm installing uses a piezo strip transducer under the saddle, so the process starts with removing the saddle. For this, I use a pair of old fret cutters on which I've smoothed the edges with a grindstone and Dremel. It works well for grabbing the saddle without marring. It's best to lightly wiggle the saddle as you pull it up and out.

2) Next, I drilled a hole at a 45-degree angle on the bass side of the saddle slot. It's important to be aware of any interior brace on the bass side, so you don't drill into it. To locate the brace, I used magnets along the outside of the bridge foot...

3) **....**and on the bridge plate inside.

4) Using a 1/8" bit, I drilled through the top and bridge plate. On the other



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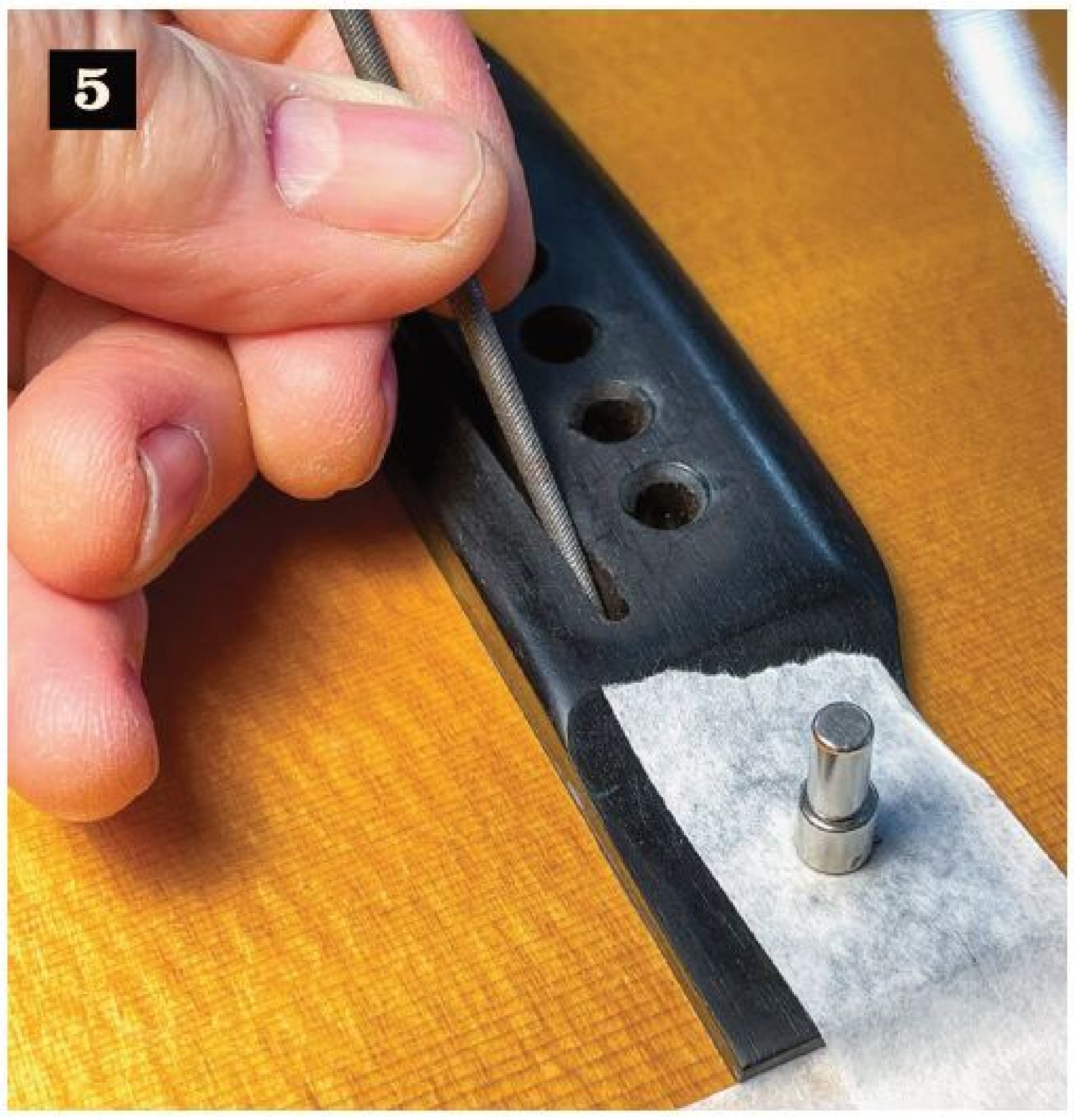
Photos: Kate Erlwine.

(treble) side, I drilled another angled hole just deep enough to hold the free end of the transducer strip – *not* through bridge plate or top.

5) I used a small rat-tail file to break/smooth any sharp edges, then carefully pulled the strip up through the hole to lay in the slot.

6) Depending on the input jack, the endpin hole must be 15/32" or 1/2", and simply drilling a hole centered on the endpin hole is not a good idea, as the wood (or in the case of this Martin, the decorative wedge inlay) can easily be damaged; I also used layers of low-tack tape to protect the area.

The StewMac Endpin Reamer is made for this, and is far better than using a drill bit. It's 6" long and has a 3/8" shank to fit an electric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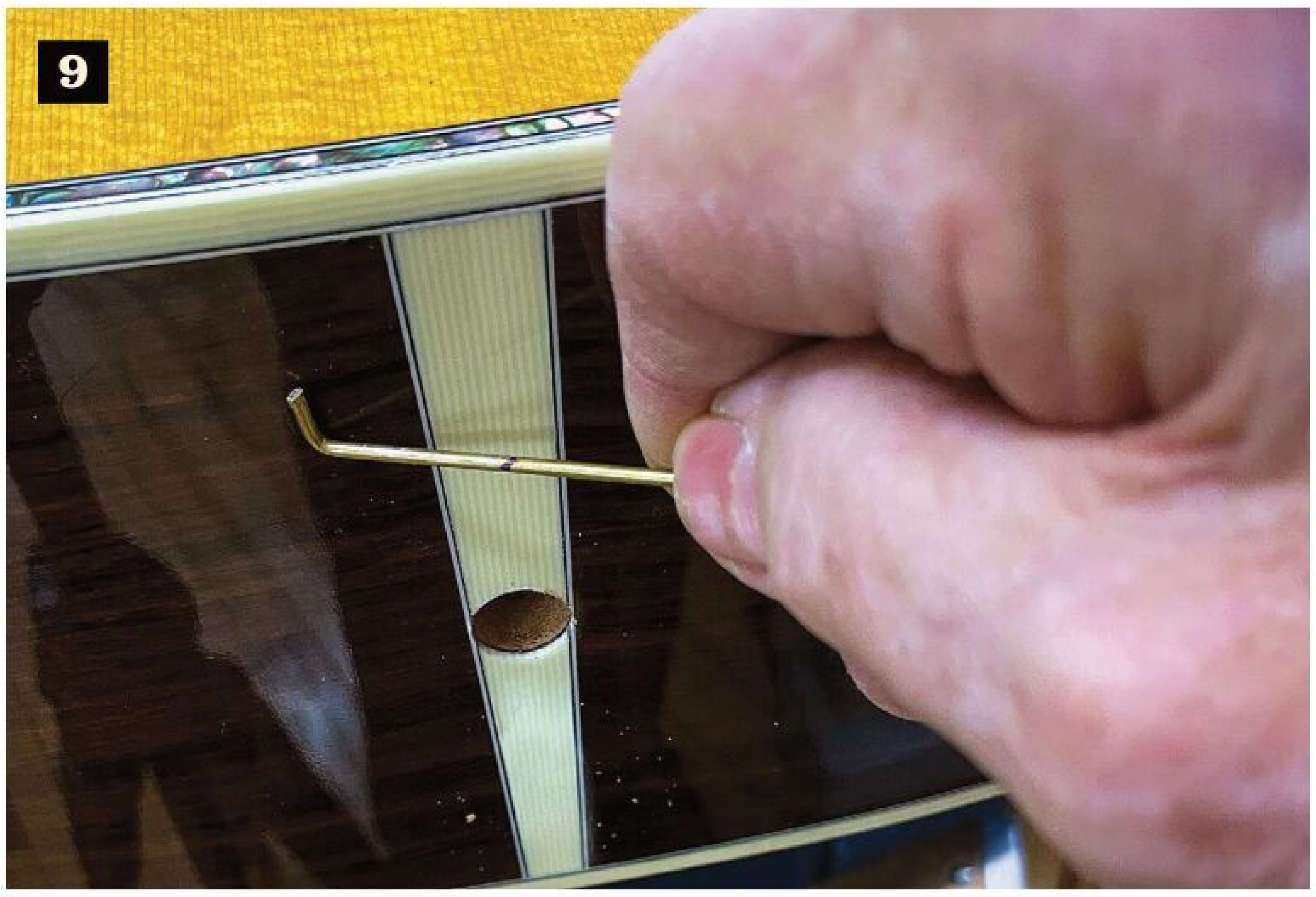
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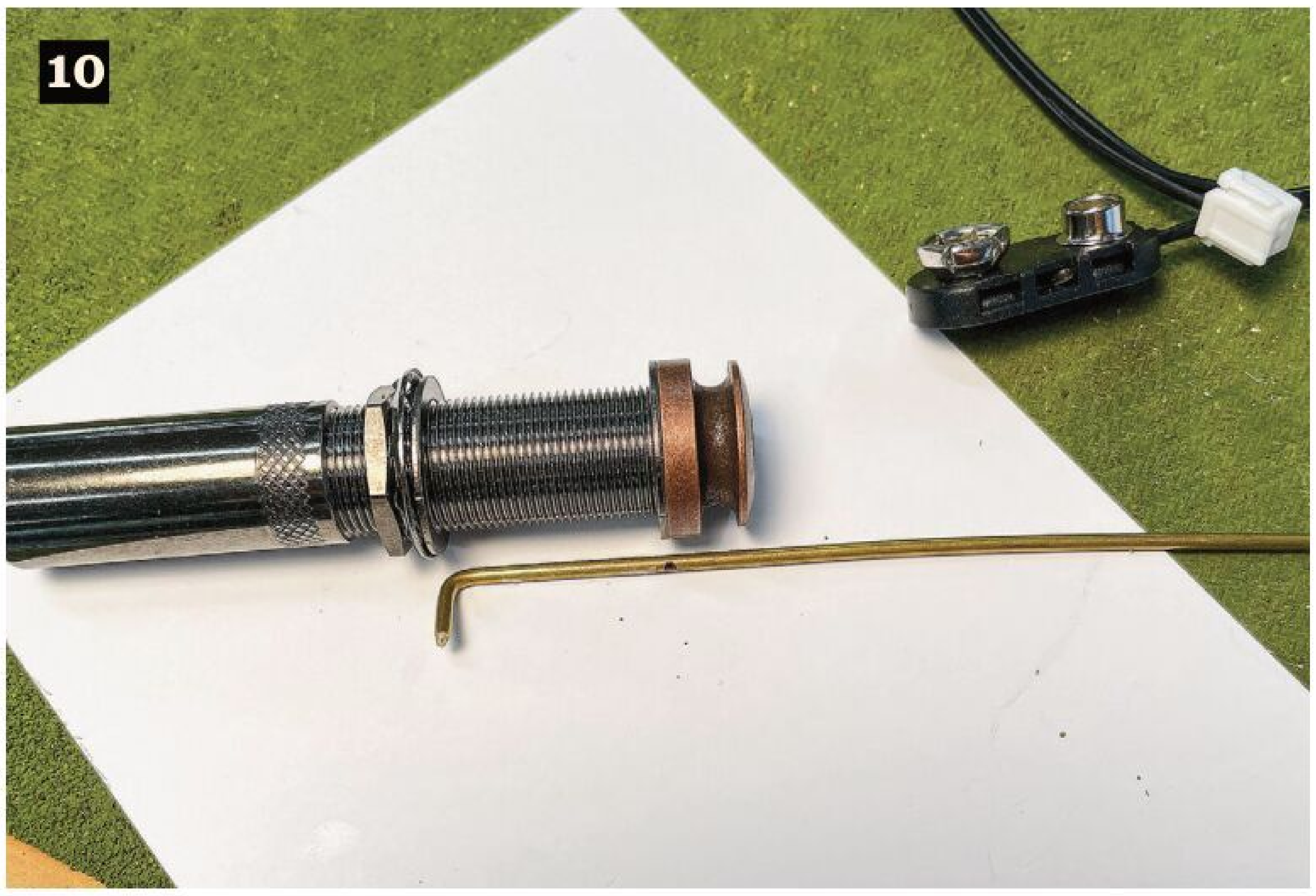
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drill, while the business end measures 1/4" in diameter at the tip, to fit the factory endpin hole, and has a 5-degree taper that runs for 2 5/8", becomes 15/32" (non-taper) for one inch...

7) ...then 1/2"-diameter for the last inch.

8) For this jack, I stopped reaming at 15/32", then slowly and steadily squared it to the end block and sides, removing it a time or two along the way to shake off the wood chips.

9) Knowing how thick the end block and sides are makes it easier to adjust the inner and outer washers and hex nuts that hold the jack. To measure it through the new hole, I used a small brass rod with one end bent at a right angle; I put it through the hole and pulled the bent end against the inside of the block, then made a mark. It's 7/8" thick.

10) Exact spacing of the hex nut and washer.

11) With the nut and washer adjusted, I poked the StewMac Jack Installation Tool through into the jack, then pulled it into place.

12) With the jack through the hole, I fastened the washer and hex-nut using a multi-spanner.

13) The microphone, battery pack, and sound hole controls mount with peel-off adhesive pads. Working through the sound hole, I used a rag dampened with alcohol to clean the wood areas where they would mount; adhesive sticks better if you do this, and it's also a good idea to seal the areas with a wipe of shellac, superglue, or lacquer.

The microphone is the trickiest component to mount because it goes on the bridge plate, in front of the pins and string ball-ends. To locate it, I installed the D and G bridge pins and moved the mic around until its center nestled between the pins. I prefer using a block of wood as long as the microphone and with a curved cutout that matches the mic's round center. The holes in the block you see here line up under the D- and G-pin holes...

14) ...and fasten to the plate with two bridge bolts from outside. The holes in the wood block are tapped. I like this better than locating against two bridge pins because it gives a solid fence and ensures the unit is running parallel to the pin holes. The set of holes in the block is for bridges with pin holes farther from the saddle, like certain Harmony models.

The battery pack can be mounted anywhere; I put it on the back, along the treble side, where it's reachable through the sound hole.

15) To mount the control panel, I pressed it carefully but firmly against the top using a padded block of wood.

Dan Erlewine has been repairing guitars for more than 50 years. He is the author of three books, dozens of magazine articles, and has produced instructional videotapes and DVDs on guitar repair. From 1986 through his retirement in late 2019, Erlewine was part of the R&D team for Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply; today he remains involved with the company, offering advice to the department and shooting video for the company's website and social media. This column has appeared in *VG* since March, 2004. You can contact Dan at dan@stewmac.com.

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Chris Leuzinger: Liz Leuzinger.

Chris Leuzinger

COUNTRY CRUNCH

By Ward Meeker

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Growing up in the tropical air of West Palm Beach, it's little wonder that Chris Leuzinger's first musical revelations had a Latin sway.

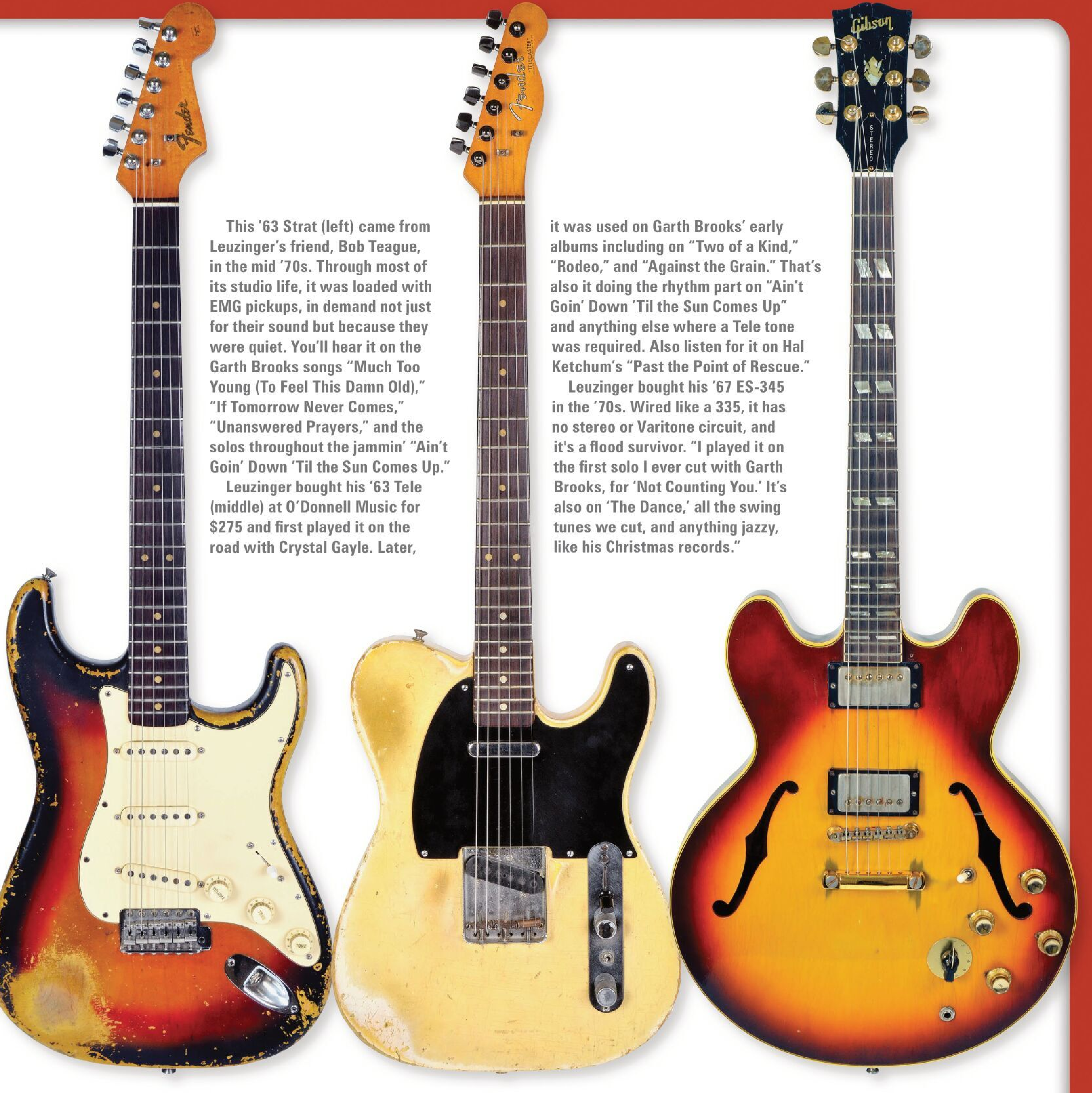
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"We had a big console record player and my mom loved listening to Harry Belafonte, Latin instrumental records and, of course, Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett," he said. "The instrumental albums especially hit home with me – I remember one called *Taboo* and one called *Bongos, Flutes and Guitars*. I was so young that of course I didn't know what 'groove' was, but I was fascinated by the percussion and the way the music flowed."

Its minor role in that music may have kept Chris from hearing the guitar at first, but that changed when, at age six, he saw Elvis Presley on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

"When I was nine, I asked my dad for a guitar, and he said the fatherly thing: 'If you get good grades this semester, I'll buy one for you.' So I worked hard, and he bought Harmony archtops for my brother and I. Mine was too big for my hands, so I ended up with a Stella."

Big things came from that small guitar, and 2022 will



This '63 Strat (left) came from Leuzinger's friend, Bob Teague, in the mid '70s. Through most of its studio life, it was loaded with EMG pickups, in demand not just for their sound but because they were quiet. You'll hear it on the Garth Brooks songs "Much Too Young (To Feel This Damn Old)," "If Tomorrow Never Comes," "Unanswered Prayers," and the solos throughout the jammin' "Ain't Goin' Down 'Til the Sun Comes Up."

Leuzinger bought his '63 Tele (middle) at O'Donnell Music for $275 and first played it on the road with Crystal Gayle. Later, it was used on Garth Brooks' early albums including on "Two of a Kind," "Rodeo," and "Against the Grain." That's also it doing the rhythm part on "Ain't Goin' Down 'Til the Sun Comes Up" and anything else where a Tele tone was required. Also listen for it on Hal Ketchum's "Past the Point of Rescue."

Leuzinger bought his '67 ES-345 in the '70s. Wired like a 335, it has no stereo or Varitone circuit, and it's a flood survivor. "I played it on the first solo I ever cut with Garth Brooks, for 'Not Counting You.' It's also on 'The Dance,' all the swing tunes we cut, and anything jazzy, like his Christmas records."

keep Leuzinger on his toes, as he'll release his first solo album and hit the road backing longtime friend Garth Brooks when the superstar's Stadium Tour resumes in March. "We'll be out through September, 33 years after our first recording session."

Did learning to play guitar as a kid change the music you listened to?

What changed for me was seeing Elvis and then my brother, Rudy, being six years older, listening to more-rocking pop music. His friends had blues records like Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf. We were learning from a guitar teacher and the Mel Bay book; the first cool lick I could play was the intro to Ray Charles' "What'd I Say," and after that, the Ventures' "Walk Don't Run" and The Chantays' "Pipeline" had me working up the neck a little bit.

What kind of amp did you have?

Our teacher was a cool guy, and he steered us toward the right stuff, so the amp we started out with was a brown Fender Super. He also steered us toward Gibson guitars, and the first nice guitar we had was an ES-330T that we bought together.

When did you first get together with friends to jam?

I was 11 or 12. A friend had a snare drum, and we'd try to play "Wipe Out" and "Walk Don't Run." In junior high, I met some guys and formed a band called The Shantells. We learned pop songs and played school dances and a National Guard armory in West Palm Beach. In Lake Worth, just south, was an

American Legion hall where they'd throw dances, and in Riviera Beach was a teen club called Music Casters, which was run by a great guy who brought in a lot of big groups – The Young Rascals, The Knickerbockers, Mitch Ryder, Neil Diamond. We backed Neil because he didn't have a band at the time.

I played with The Shantells until a group of older guys called the Brom Beaus invited me to join them. They were one of the bigger bands in the area, and I was with them until they started going to Fort Lauderdale and Miami to play clubs. I was still too young to do that, so I went back with The Shantells, then moved through different bands until I ended up with friends in another popular South Florida group, Peace and Quiet, which was doing its own songs. That's when I started developing a passion for coming up with my own guitar parts.

What was your guitar by then?

I was moving through thinline Gibsons – I had a 335, 345, and 355.

All at the same time?

I'd trade one for the next, though for while I had the 355 and 330. With all of them, my Super Reverb would really sing. That's why I liked them so much.

What was your next career move?

In 1969, I joined a blues band called The Monopoly, which moved from Florida to New York City. By that time I'd gotten turned on to Freddie King and British blues – Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor, and my favorite, Peter Green, through John Mayall records. Because of those guys and Bloomfield, blues players started gravitating to Les Pauls. I wanted one mostly because of Clapton and Green.

One day, I ran into a guy on the street who had one, and I traded him my 355 and 330 for it. Being 19 and hasty, I failed to realize it had P-90s. At the time, Dan Armstrong's shop had Les Paul Standards hanging on the wall. Had I known better, I probably could've gone in and traded for one of those. But I grabbed the first one I ran into (laughs).

I was in New York a year and a half, then the band broke up and I moved back to Florida, where I re-joined Peace and Quiet until it broke up in '71. When I was 21, the drummer and I jumped in the van and moved to Nashville to join some friends in their band, Corduroy Orioles.

What kind of music did they play?

Mostly, blues; I hadn't played one country lick at the time (laughs).

What was the scene like at the time for a blues player from New York by way of Florida?

In the early '70s, Nashville was super-creative, with a lot of classic songwriters and great music. One of the places we played was the Exit/In, an amazing venue that was bringing in all types of local and national acts. You might catch John Prine, Johnny Cash, The Police, or Buddy Rich's big band. A music publisher named Juan Contreras heard our band and introduced us to Norbert Putnam, who owned Quadraphonic Studios. They'd just finished recording Dobie Gray's "Drift Away" and needed a band to tour with him. We got the gig just as "Drift Away" was becoming a hit.

What stands out in your memory about backing Gray?

It was my first big road gig – a big adventure. But, with the success of "Drift Away," we should have been doing concerts and opening for big acts, but we were playing clubs and small venues. It was fun and Dobie was a fantastic guy, but for me, the best thing about that gig was that Reggie Young, one of the greatest session players ever, had played most of the guitar on Dobie's records, and I had to learn every lick he played because they wanted us to sound just like the record. Reggie was all about tone, feel, taste, where to play, where *not* to play, and he came up with great parts.

That was a musical education that helped me transition from just a live blues player to one who could approach a song and come up with meaningful parts.

Were you still using the Les Paul?

I was, and my good friend, Danny Flowers, used his Tele.

Which amps were you using?

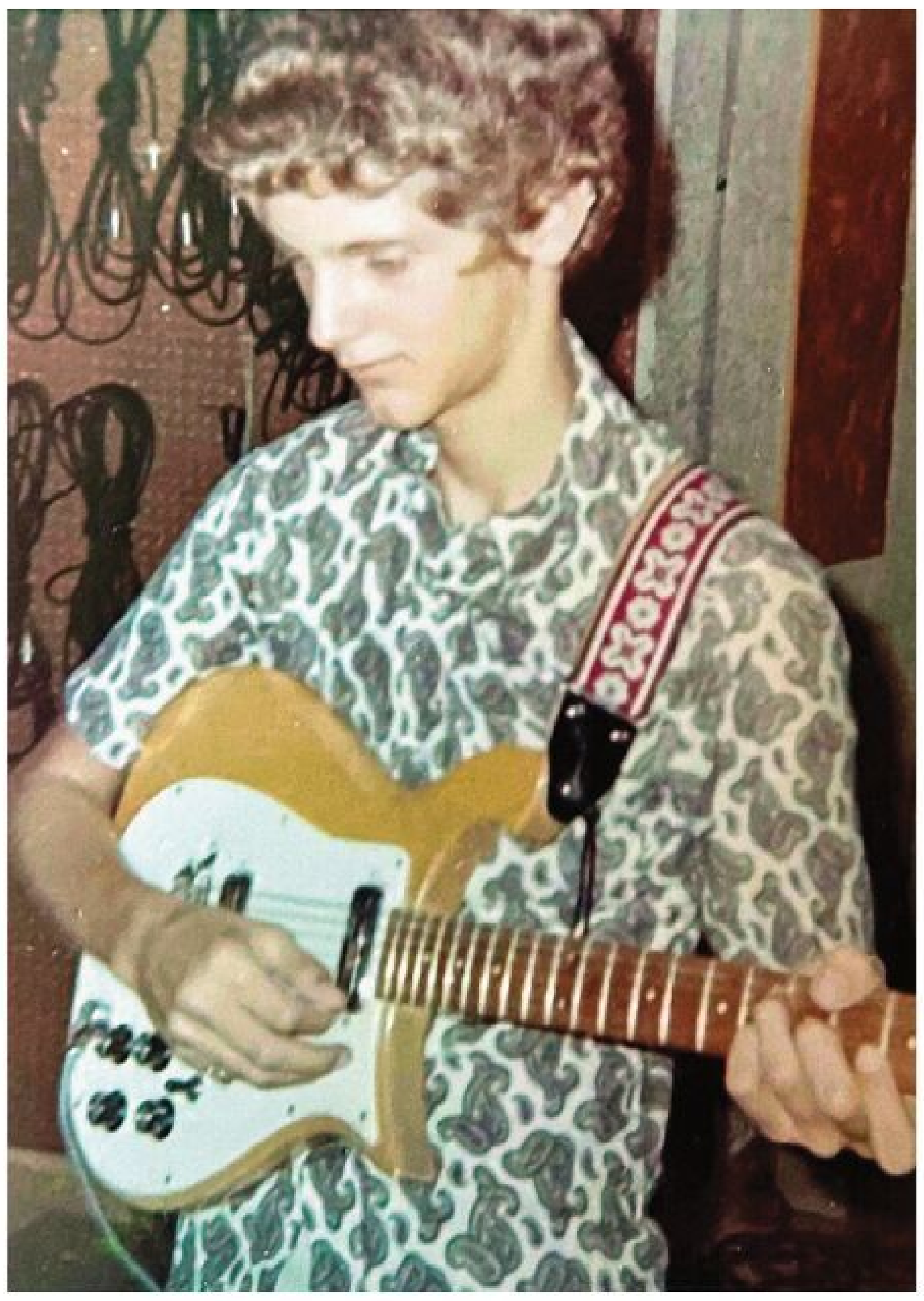
I was playing through Fenders – a Twin or a Pro.

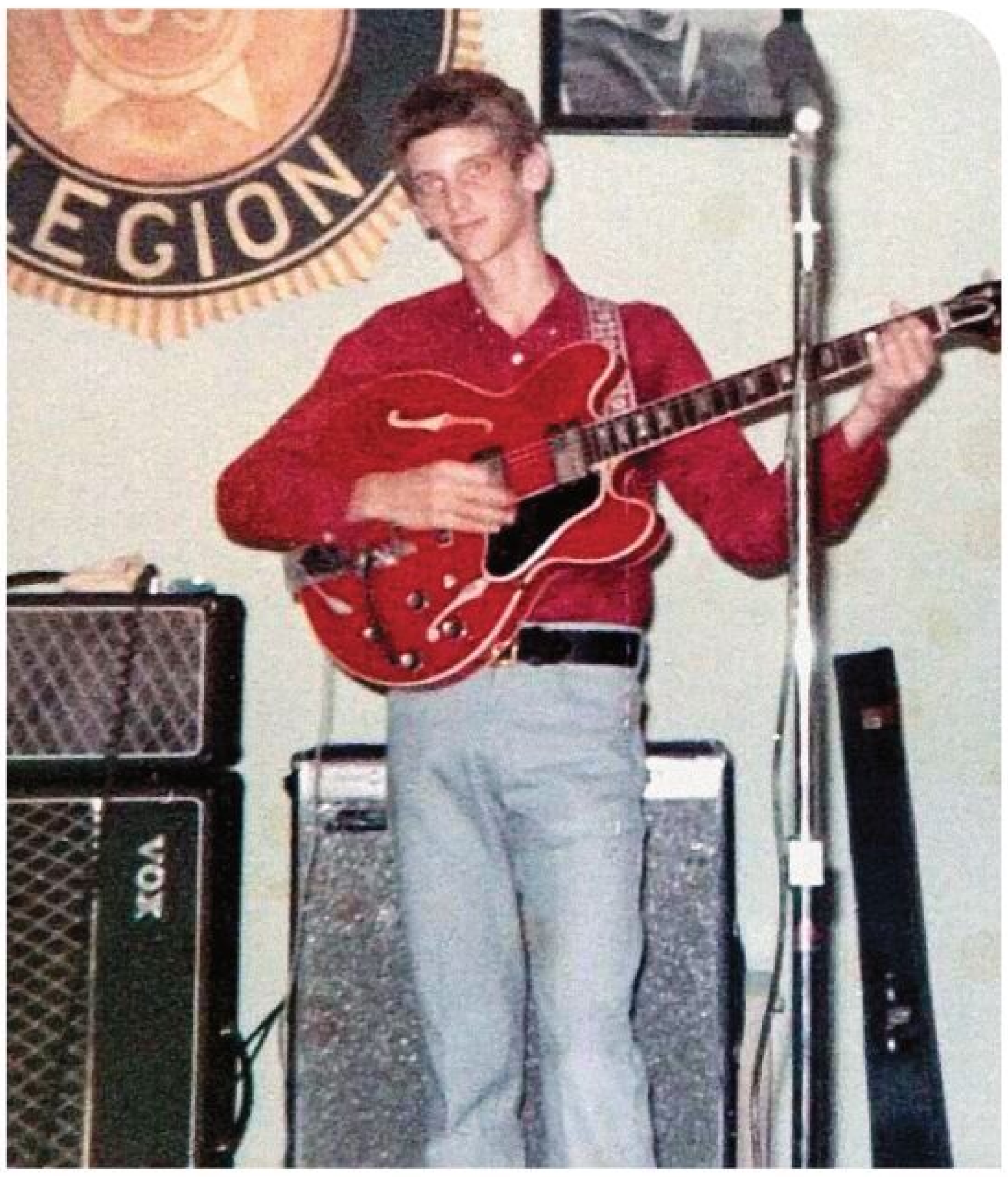
How long did the tour last?

About a year. Dobie lived in California, and after our tour was finished, he started hiring guys from there.

What came next for you?

Norbert had been producing the folk art°ist Buffy Sainte-Marie, and they needed a band to tour with her. By that time, some of the guys





Leuzinger at age 16 (left), with his '66 Rickenbacker 450/12 (in Mapleglo) at Dukoff Recording, Miami, and in the '60s with his ES-335 at a Brom Beaus gig. He's plugged into a Vox Royal Guardsmen.

from Peace and Quiet had moved to Nashville and were putting that band back together. I joined them, and we got the gig with Buffy, touring Australia and other places. She also took us to L.A. to record, which was a big deal, working with producer Henry Lewy. We were green, but he was very nice and patient, and we ended up on half of her record. For the other half, he used John Guerin, Larry Carlton, and guys he'd used on Joni Mitchell's records.

On those sessions, I met guitarist Ben Benay, who turned me on to repairman John Carruthers, who worked on guitars for Carlton, Jay Graydon, and a lot of others. I met Paul Rivera, too, who was modding Deluxe amps, and I ended up with one of them.

After Buffy, did you go back in Nashville?

Yes, I started getting more calls for studio work, and was playing more acoustic guitar so if I didn't get a session as an electric player I could get hired to play acoustic. One of the guys I met was Allen Reynolds, who was producing Crystal Gayle. In 1977, he started using me on those sessions. It turned out Crystal also needed a band to go on the road. Allen recommended our band, and she hired us. Allen was my main mentor, and I worked in the studio with him for 30-plus years, until he retired.

Another producer, David Malloy, also started using me on records for Eddie Rabbitt. I played electric on those – the Les Paul on some, but by that time I also had a Tele and a Strat.

How polished were you as a studio player by then?

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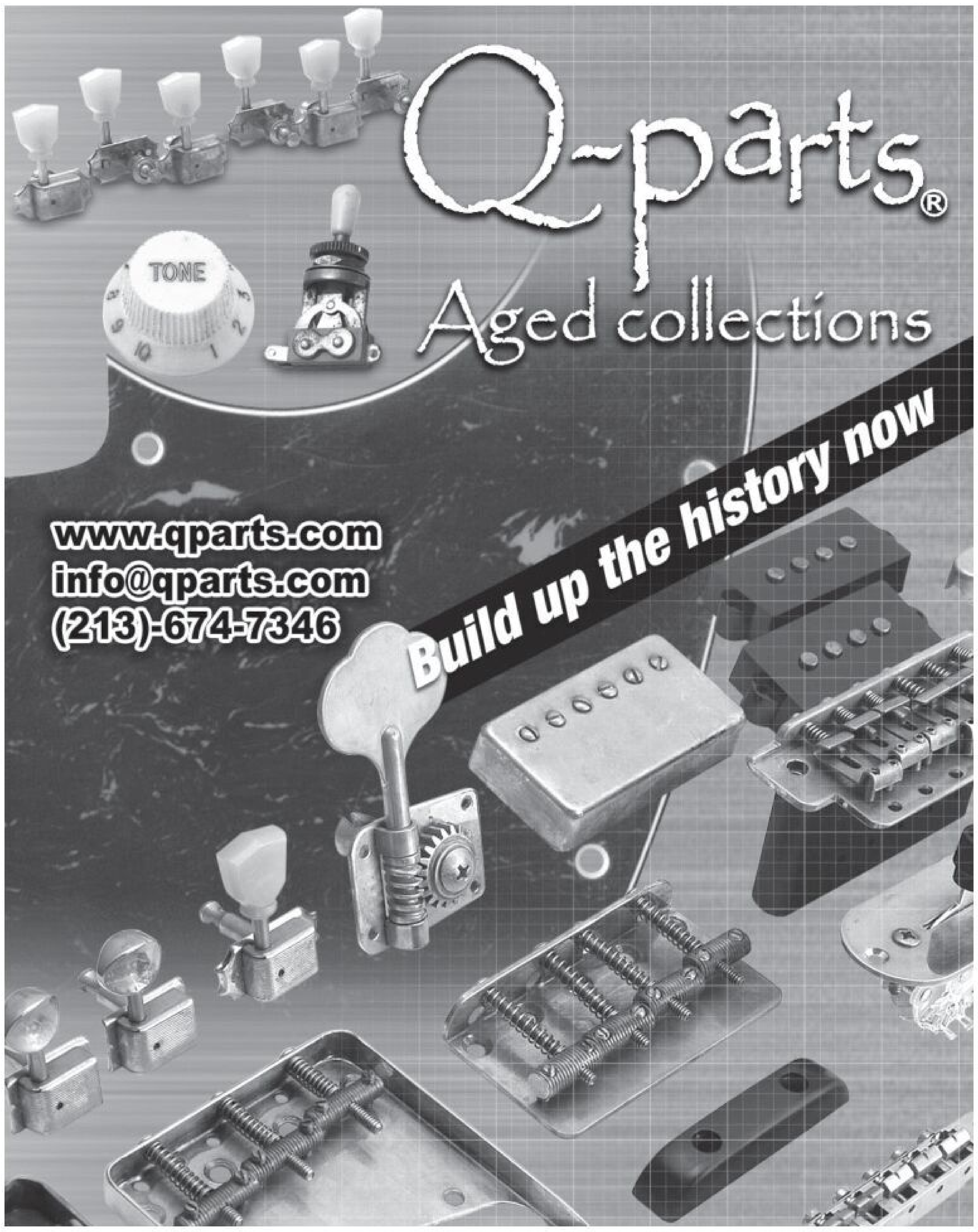
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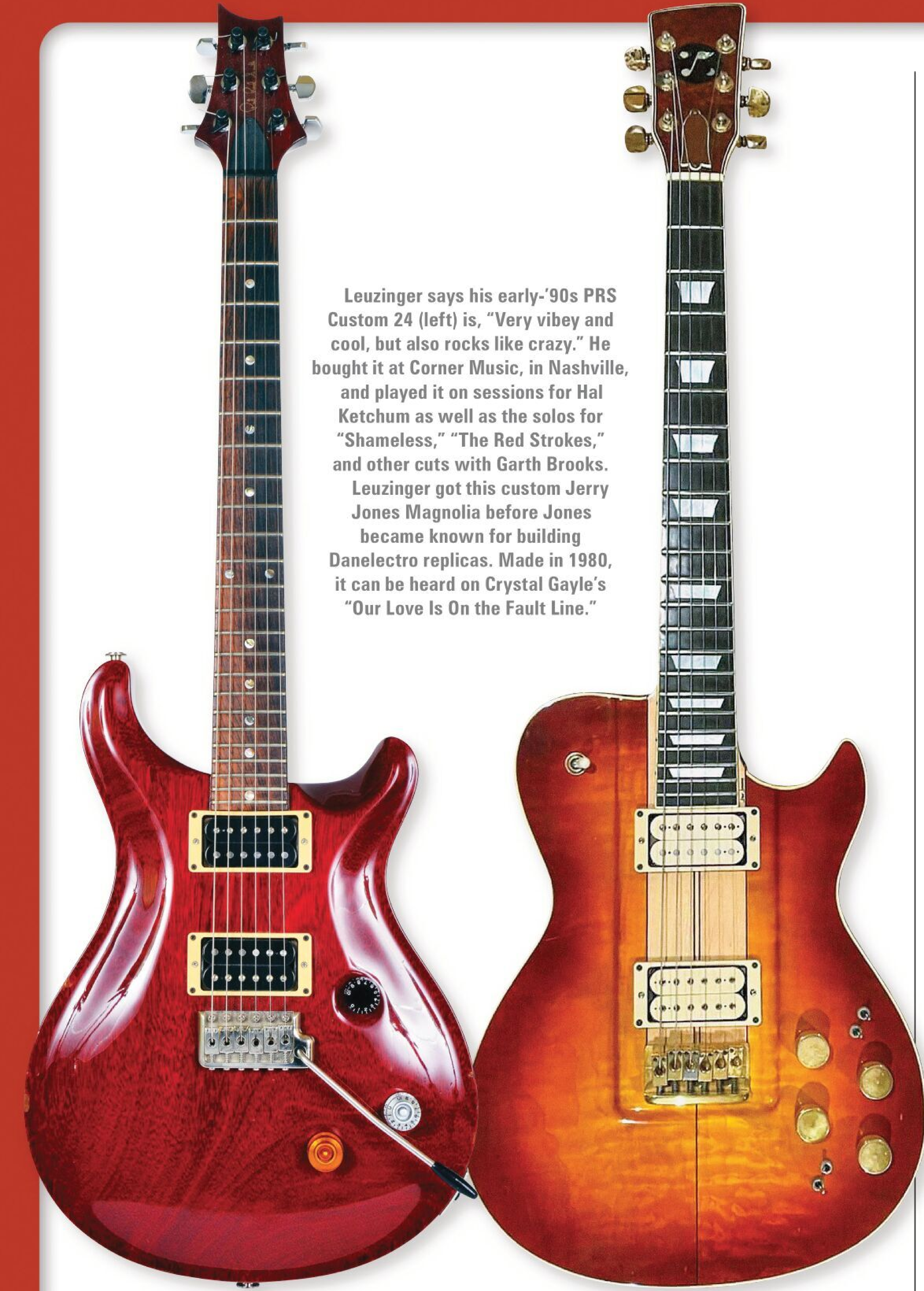


Leuzinger says his early-'90s PRS Custom 24 (left) is, "Very vibey and cool, but also rocks like crazy." He bought it at Corner Music, in Nashville, and played it on sessions for Hal Ketchum as well as the solos for "Shameless," "The Red Strokes," and other cuts with Garth Brooks.

Leuzinger got this custom Jerry Jones Magnolia before Jones became known for building Danelectro replicas. Made in 1980, it can be heard on Crystal Gayle's "Our Love Is On the Fault Line."

I was kind of green on the early Eddie records, but being in the room with guys like Joe Osborn and Bobby Thompson, you learn *quick*. I was learning how to come up with parts and get my studio sounds together – realizing what a session player was.

It wasn't quite like playing New York blues clubs...

Right! Being a studio musician is all about playing the perfect part that fits the emotion of a song and complements the singer. It's learning to fit in, listening, and coming up with a good hook or solo. Sometimes it means getting out of the way. One reason any producer hires a new player is because they're doing something fresh. And if you fit in with the other musicians on the session, you have a good chance of being called back.

Are there fills, licks, or solos you especially remember playing?

Well, with Eddie, my parts were not really featured. But with Crystal, I played all the acoustic and electric parts on "Don't Take Me Half the Way," and on "Our Love Was On the Fault Line," I stacked a three-part harmony solo in the middle and end. On "Why Have You Left the One You Left Before," I played some slide.

From the producer's standpoint, what do you think stood out with your playing?

It was probably my tones and style, because I came up through blues, not country. I had a different sound and took some chances. I don't know if "aggressive" is the right word, but back then, country guitarists played really clean, and I had a little more bite, a little more crunch to my sound.

I remember the first time I showed up with two amps and told the engineer I wanted to run stereo with a Boss chorus pedal. He said, "You wanna do what?" (laughs)

I had a couple of those big, gray Boss pedals that sounded great. And when MXR's Dyna Comp and Phase 90 came along, I used them, too.

In Crystal's music, was there room for you to flex?

Well, her music in the beginning was very traditional, but as she had more hits it became a lot of different styles; she'd do anything from Billie Holiday to a full-blown pop ballad or a B.B. King song. It was a great gig; we went all over the world and did lot of live TV, did "The Midnight Special" a couple of times, Johnny Carson three times. Crystal and her husband and manager, Bill, took great care of us.

"Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" was huge on the pop charts.

It was, and that hit right when we were hired to tour with her. I didn't play on that record, but we went from working small clubs and county fairs to headlining huge shows within a few months. It took off like a rocket. It was very cool and she gracefully transitioned into it, and brought it at every show. She's a truly great artist.

Being Loretta Lynn's sister, there's some talent in the blood.

Very much. And, Allen Reynolds was very influential with her. If you listen closely to those records, they have a very intimate sound, with her voice just out front. Allen really helped her develop her vocal style, and one of his main things was making her different than Loretta.

Was the Crystal gig year-round?

Yes, but another thing that was cool about it was she wasn't touring all the time, so I could maintain sessions in town. I had to miss some stuff, but was still getting more studio work than ever. The biggest session I missed was with David Malloy, who was going to Caribou Ranch to produce Eddie Rabbitt's *Horizon* album in 1980, which had "Drivin' My Life Away" and "I Love a Rainy Night." It was a bummer for me to miss that one, but Billy Joe Walker and Larry Byrom ended up playing guitars, so it worked out okay for them (laughs).

In the recording world, if you're not there, somebody else comes in. If they do a great job, they'll get called next time. Losing those sessions made me think twice, and while working on Kathy Mattea records with Allen, I thought, "I need to make a decision." In 1988, after 11 years with Crystal, I decided to get off the road.

Was Allen pushing you to make the move?

He wasn't, but another great session player, Jim Colvard, who was Allen's main guy before I started, was always telling me, "You gotta get into the studio." He hired me to play on one of my first master sessions, with Johnny Paycheck, and he'd tell me, "On the road, as long as your artist is doing okay, you're good. But you can build *your own* career in the studio."

Was the money better in the studio?

Well, it could be if you were working a lot. We were making really good money with Crystal, and it was guaranteed, whereas studio work was up and down. Right after I left Crystal's gig I went through a summer with not much going on, which made me question my choice. But, that fall, it started picking up, and the timing ended up being great because that's when Allen called about doing sessions with a new guy from Oklahoma named Garth Brooks. Had I missed those sessions, that would've been something to *really* be upset about (laughs).

Do you remember how he described Garth to you?

He didn't say much, just that we were going to record four songs and see if he and Garth could work well together. By that time, I'd done a ton of work with Allen, so it just felt like a regular session.

What was your first impression of Garth?

Right away, we knew he was a good singer, and the songs were cool. The first one we recorded was "Not Counting You," and we also cut "Much Too Young." I can't remember the other two, but the first time we cut "Not Counting You," we did it as a standard Nashville shuffle. We went into the control room to listen, and Garth, being the new guy, may have been a little intimidated by the players, but he was confident enough to say, "I wonder if we can make this sound a little more live and a little more rocking..." So we went back in and came up with some pushes, rocked it harder, and he got everybody heading in the right direction. He wanted it to not to be everyday, normal stuff, and wanted us to stretch out. We got *that* message right from the start.

Is that your acoustic intro on "Much Too Young?"

No, that's Mark Casstevens. I played electric.

Safe to say you were onboard with Garth pushing country songs toward rock and roll?

Yes, and of course, me being a blues, more-rock-type player, that fit my style better. I was able to stretch more.

Did you get to back him live?

He had already hired Dave Gant, who's been his band leader since the very beginning, and booked a couple gigs before he was able to get a touring band together. So, the guys who did the sessions – drummer Milton Sledge, bass player Mike Chapman, and myself – played those gigs. We opened for the New Grass Revival in Johnson City, Tennessee, and Garth drove the van over and back.

He was something special to see live – the energy and the way he connected with the audience. At that time, most country singers would just stand at the mic, but Garth was very influenced by rock acts, so he was much more animated, which got his crowds excited.

Five years ago, Chris Leuzinger sold both of his '60s Fenders to Garth Brooks (left). "I was using other guitars more, and when I mentioned wanting to sell," he said. "Garth said he would love to have them because I'd played them on his records. That made me feel good because it kept them in the family."

Brooks with his "G-Men" session players, circa 1991. In back (from left) are Rob Hajacos (fiddle), Milton Sledge (drums), Mark Casstevens (acoustic guitar), Bobby Wood (keys), and Chris Leuzinger. In front are recording engineer Mark Miller, Mike Chapman (bass), Bruce Bouton (steel guitar), Brooks, and producer Allen Reynolds.

What was Capitol Records' reaction to those first four songs?

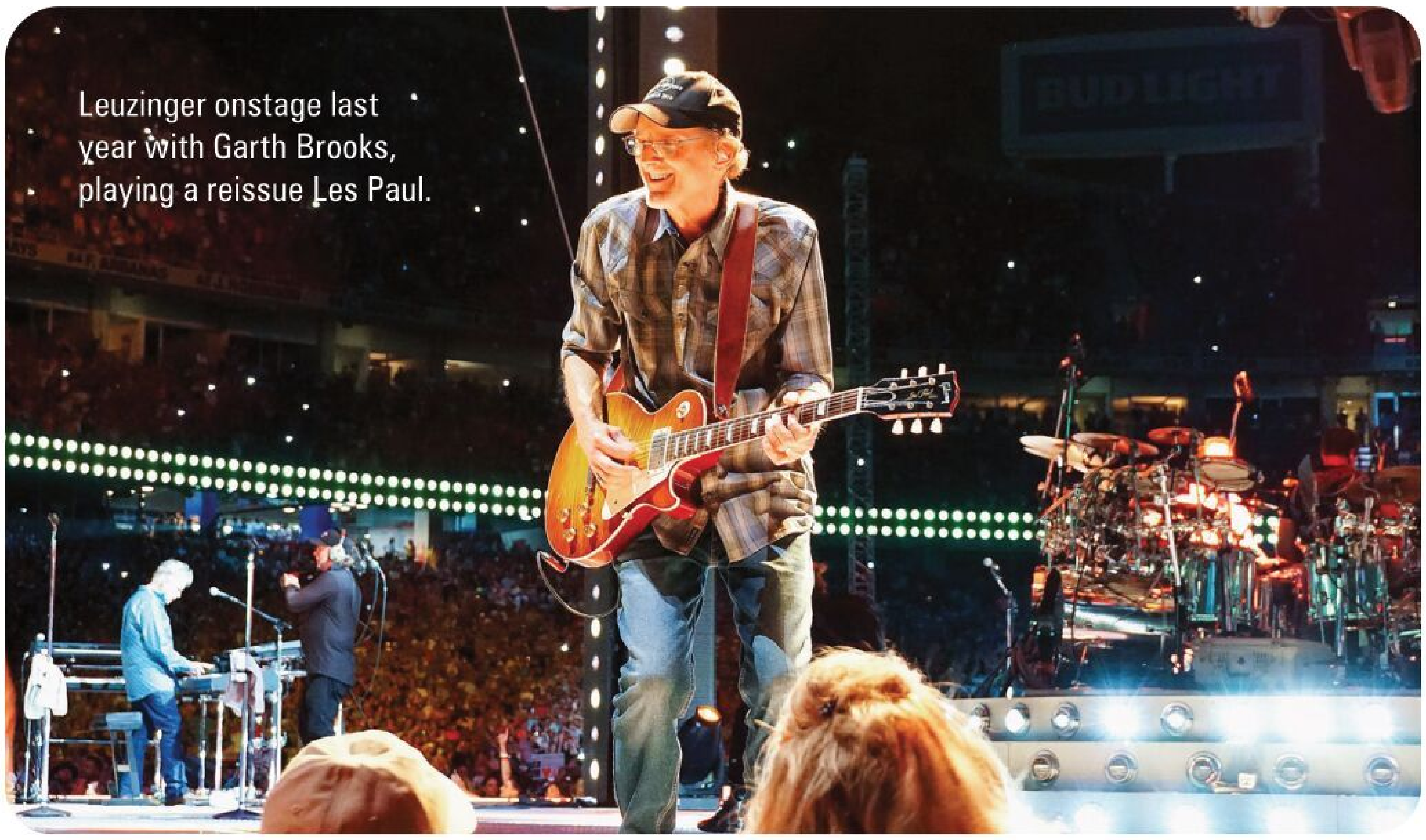
Well, they liked them enough to have Allen complete an album. At the beginning, though, Garth was not a priority for the label, so he and his manager, Bob Doyle, did a lot of their own promotion. After the first couple singles did well, *then* the label started realizing Garth was special. And once Jimmy Bowen at Capitol saw him live, he said, "We need to make this guy the priority," and things really got off the ground.

Which guitars and amps did you use at the time?

Mostly just the Les Paul, 345, the Tele, and Strat. I had a '70s Deluxe Reverb and a Music Man 210-HD. But by the time we started recording with Garth, we'd moved into the big-rack days. I had a 20-something-space rack and a Boogie power amp.

Is that your solo on "Friends In Low Places"?

Yes, that was me with the Les Paul sneaking in a little of the rock influence. Other producers were commenting at that time about how



Leuzinger onstage last year with Garth Brooks, playing a reissue Les Paul.

we were starting to get the first crunchy guitar tones. If you compare it to today's country, it's pretty tame, but back then it was kind of groundbreaking. The big guitar crunchy rhythm parts on "The Thunder Rolls" were also that guitar.

You were called for all 16 of Garth's studio albums – except, ironically, the 1999 Chris Gaines bit – which means in the '90s you were one of the most-heard guitarists in the world given that nine of the albums made it #1 on *Billboard's* country-albums chart and 19 of his singles were #1 country hits.

Garth is the most loyal artist ever, and although from time to time he'd bring in other players, it was the same seven guys – the G-Men – on all those records. Once his career started blowing up, it was very exciting. It's fun to hear your parts on the radio, but the most rewarding thing is that people still love his music 30-some years later. He still fills stadiums with people young and old who sing along to every song. I'm grateful to have been able to participate.

What were some of your major sessions other than for Garth?

I recorded with Hal Ketchum, Kathy Mattea, Emmylou Harris, George Jones, George Strait, Alabama, Montgomery Gentry, and Julio Iglesias, to name a few. Mark Casstevens dropped my name to producer Kyle Lehning when he was working with Randy Travis and Dan Seals. I played acoustic, mostly, on records for both guys, and they were really fun. In those days, there was a lot of sessions with two acoustics, and Mark and I would come up with parts that complemented each other, usually with different capo positions.

Dan Seals' *In a Quiet Room* records were under the radar; we re-cut a bunch of his songs with just Mark and myself and Viktor Krauss on upright bass, then they overdubbed Dobro and other guitars. Those records show some of our best acoustic playing because they're totally stripped-down – no piano or drums, nothing to lean on. Some of the pop songs Dan had done in England Dan and John Ford Coley were challenging, with interesting changes. We had to play through them with great feel and no errors or squeaks.

What are some of your more-recent sessions?

I just did a session with Reba McEntire and The Isaacs. It was the first time I'd worked with Reba and she was really nice; her singing with the Isaacs was heavenly. The last couple records we've done with Garth have been really enjoyable.

A lot of my work these days is custom records, where people come from different areas to record in Nashville. I really enjoy those because those folks really appreciate what you do. It's their dream to make a record here and they're thrilled to have you play on it.

Are there a lot of players in Nashville who work those projects?

There are now. In the '90s and the early 2000s, things were so busy you couldn't have gotten any of the main players to do something like that. But that's not the case anymore. You can come to Nashville and get Brent Mason on your record. You can hire Lonnie Wilson to play drums and Mike Rojas to play keys. There's also a lot of virtual stuff; I do a lot of that and I'm grateful it was available during the pandemic. Sessions all but stopped for a while.

In the infamous Nashville flood of 2010, several of your guitars were in a storage facility that was underwater for three days.

Yeah, luckily, I had my Fenders and all of my acoustic instruments at home. But in storage I had two guitar trunks and a bunch of amps and cabinets. I was praying my trunks were waterproof, but unfortunately they were not. It was astounding seeing the number of players who had stuff there – Brent Rowan, Brent Mason, Michael Spriggs, Jerry McPherson...

What do you recall about first going there after the water receded?

When we were finally allowed down there, of course there were a lot of people showing up at the same time. It was depressing, pulling out all these ruined instruments. Joe Glaser was there, and I showed him my Les Paul, all green with gunk, just terrible-looking. I said, "Can you fix this?" and he said, "Yeah, don't worry about it." Later, he told me, "I didn't really know if I could fix it, but standing there that day, I wasn't going to tell you I couldn't." (laughs)

Which other guitars were there?

I had my '67 ES-345, my '60s Jazzmaster, a Sadowsky gut-string, and an Anderson Cobra – those two were hardly damaged except for electronics, being more-modern with thicker finishes. There was also two vintage Danelectros, one a Guitarlin, which is a rare instrument. It's still playable. There were three Jerry Jones guitars – a baritone, a six-string bass, and a 12-string. My Gretsch Double Anniversary was in there. They all had to be at Joe's for quite a while. They had to dry slowly so they'd warp as little as possible, and obviously, he had a *lot* to do. Joe is a miracle worker; my Gretsch and the 345 both had to have neck re-sets, binding repaired, and he saved some of the pickups by repairing the winding. They sound great. The Les Paul's finish was damaged, but we decided to redo only the back of the neck because it had pitted really bad. We left the rest alone because, like Joe said, it's part of the history of the guitar (see the "Classics" feature on page 46).

In 2019, you were asked to go on Garth's ongoing Stadium Tour. What's it like?

The shows are incredible and the audience energy and participation is off the charts; the last show we played in 2020 was to 91,000 fans. And just like Garth has been loyal to the G-Men, he's been loyal to his touring band, singers, and crew, and many of them have been with him since the beginning.

When I'm out with them, it's a blast doing the two-electric thing with Gordon Kennedy. At first it was a challenge, getting my sound together for stadiums, but the crew has been very helpful. Guitar techs Scott Fowler and John Kinsch are absolutely great. It's truly a dream come true and I'm so grateful Garth asked me to join.

What can we expect from your solo album?

It's all original instrumentals inspired by my musical influences through the years – a mix of R&B, reggae, Latin, old-school rock, pop, and vibe/mood music. I'm playing all the guitars, joined by a varied cast of my session-player friends for each song. It should be released sometime early this year and I really hope people enjoy it. VG

Chris Leuzinger live 2021: Jason Bryan.

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Johnstone onstage with Elton John in 2016.

DAVEY JOHNSTONE

Ringmaster for Reg

BY BRET ADAMS

Countless millions are fans of Davey Johnstone's work, even if they don't know his name. Anyone who appreciates pop music from the past 50 years has heard his guitar, mandolin, or banjo on hits by Elton John and many others.

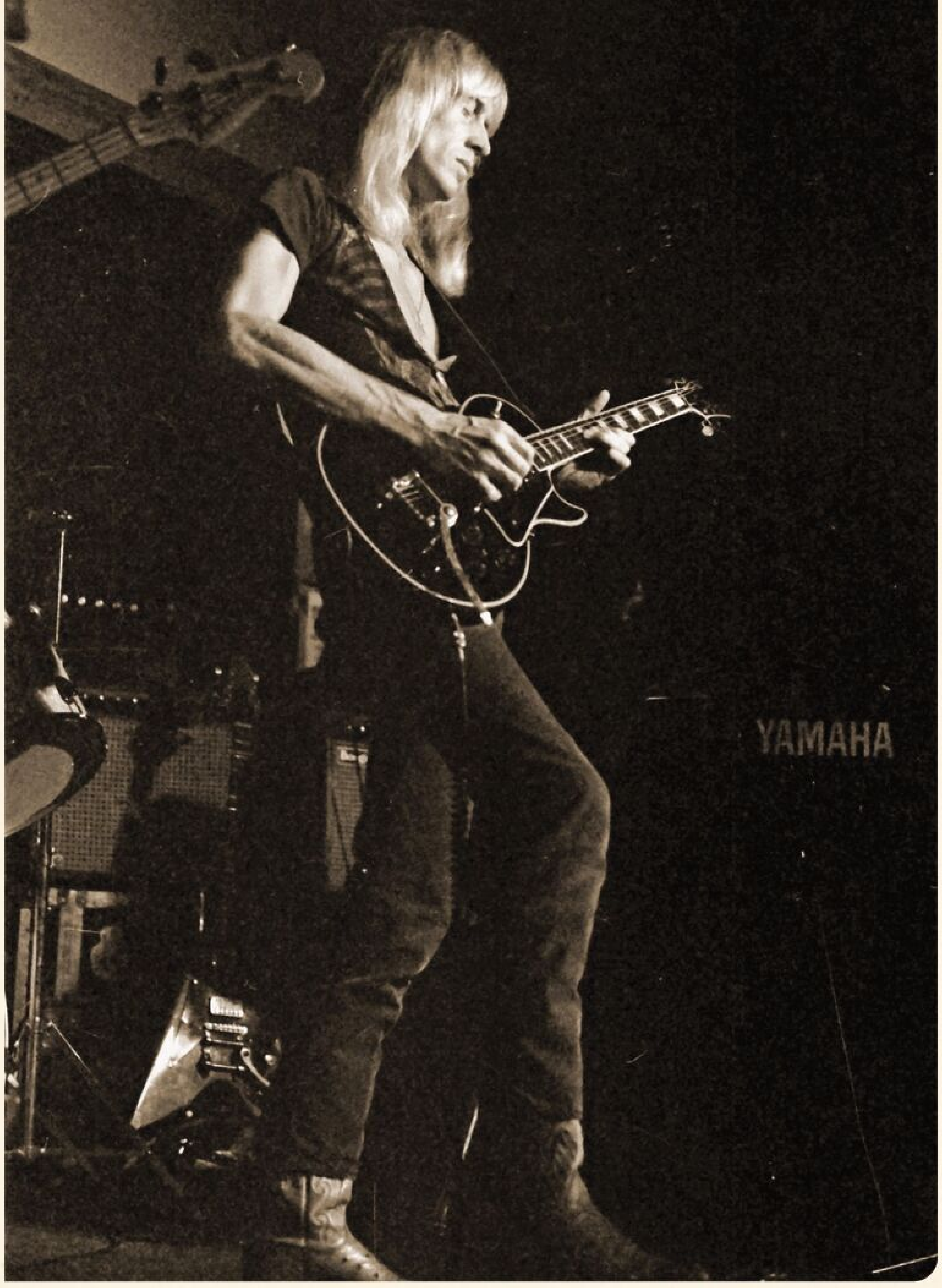
Johnstone has been an essential part of John's band for most of the superstar's career. In 2018, John began a Farewell Yellow Brick Road final tour, a world trek of three-hour concerts that enjoyed rave reviews until Covid-19 rattled the planet. With the unexpected time off, Johnstone started working on The Davey Johnstone Band's *Deeper Than My Roots*, his first solo effort since 1973's *Smiling Face*.

"There was no plan on doing this album at all, because we still have another year and a half to run on the farewell tour," Johnstone said. "But we were stopped in our tracks, like everybody else.

"When it became apparent I was going to be home for a while, I started kicking around ideas and everything fell into place; I got together with my friend, Rick Otto, a poet and an actor here in L.A., and we started writing songs. Within a couple months, I had four or five where I felt, 'Hey, we've got something going here.' We continued to write, and I recorded at home and at a friend's home studio."

Deeper became a family affair on which

Johnstone with Elton John: Radovan Stoklasa/Reuters/Alamy.



Davey Johnstone 1982 courtesy of D. Johnstone. Johnstone 1985: United Archives GmbH/Alamy.

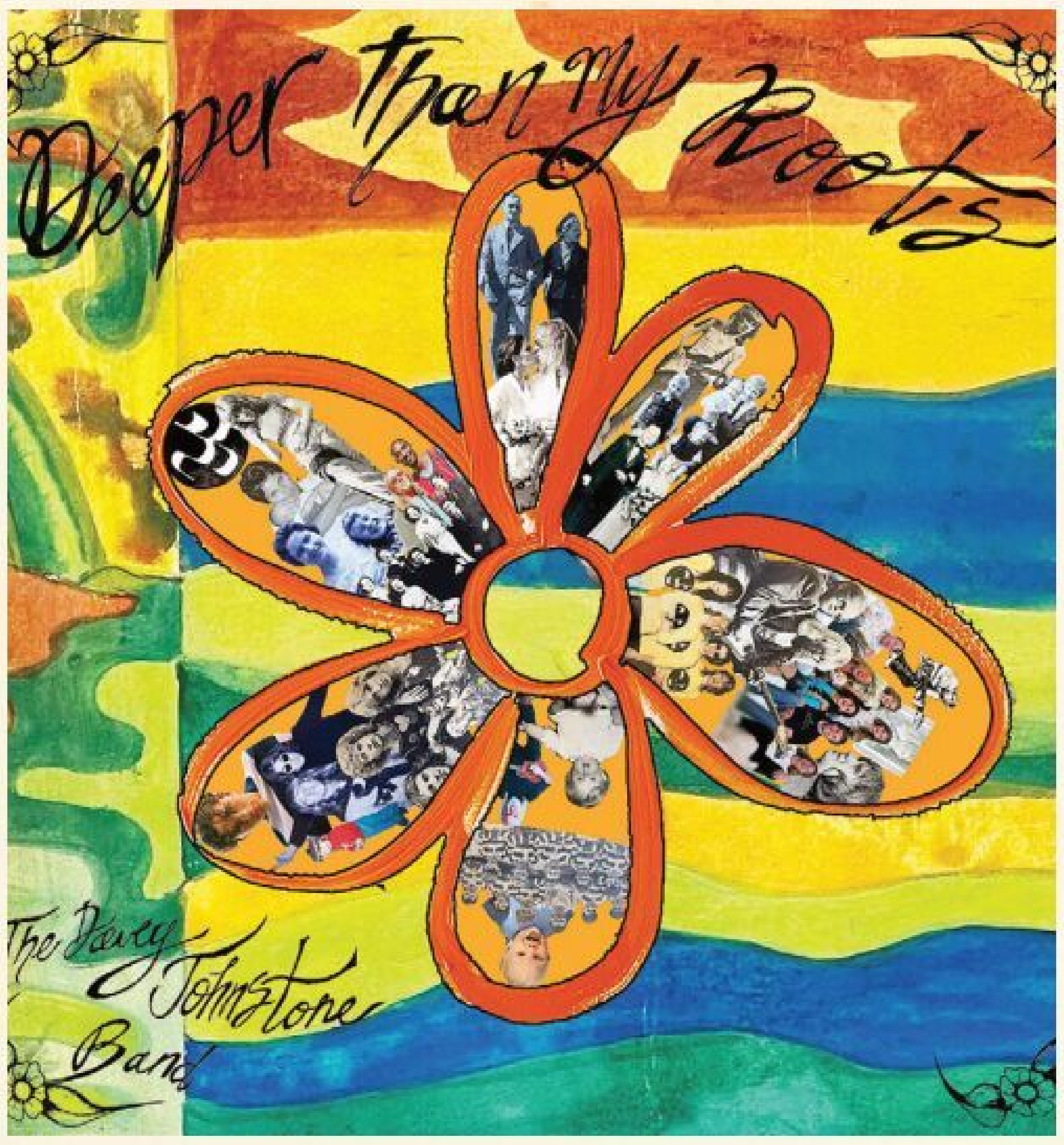
Johnstone with his three-pickup Les Paul Deluxe onstage in 1982 and '86. "It's a great guitar," he said. "I actually chose it for Elton, at Manny's in 1972. He said, 'I want a guitar for my house.' I saw it and said, 'If you want something good, get that.' Two months later, in the middle of a tour, one of our trucks was stolen; in it was the third Fender mandolin ever made, two Les Pauls – one gold top and a sunburst – and a '68 Strat. They also got Dee Murray's Precision and Jazz basses. It was *horrible*. We had a gig that night and Elton said, 'I'll have somebody bring the guitar you picked for me,' and I've been using it ever since." The theft deterred Johnstone from becoming attached to vintage instruments.

Johnstone's sons and daughter contribute – Elliot (lead vocals on all but the song Davey sings), Charlie (keyboards/background vocals), Jesse (drums/songwriting/recording/production), Tam (songwriting/recording/production), and Juliet (cover art). Guest drummers include longtime Elton bandmate Nigel Olsson, and Denny Seiwell from Paul McCartney and Wings.

The album incorporates styles that reflect Johnstone's diverse tastes. The first single, "Melting Snow," is shimmering '60s-flavored pop.

"I've always been the kind of artist who doesn't record things for a specific market," Johnstone said. "So is Elton, by the way. My sensibilities are for pop music, which for me encompasses the whole thing – folk, rock, jazz influences, whatever. This record was whatever came along, whatever felt good to me.

"There are inspirations I've always lent because of my love of the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks, and bands like that. I'm very proud of that – that feel. To me, good music never gets old – especially good rock and pop. You never hear people saying, 'We're going to forget about the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd,' because they are classic aspects of rock music that have carried through."



Davey Johnstone's first solo album in nearly 50 years, *Deeper Than My Roots* is a blend of his classic rock and pop influences, with major contributions from his talented children.

In addition to playing guitar on *Deeper*, he decided to play bass, incorporating what he learned from the late Elton bassists Dee Murray and Bob Birch, current bassist Matt Bissonette, and the melodic touches of McCartney's playing in the Beatles.

The songs are new compositions and recordings, except for the two instrumentals, "Walt Dizney" and "Black Scotland," which were recorded 10 years ago with Birch.

"These were the last two things he played on, and I wanted to honor his memory," said Johnstone. "Both are very meaningful. When I heard 'Walt Dizney,' I went, 'That sounds like David Gilmour and Pink Floyd!' For 'Black Scotland,' the title came to me because of Little Richard. I worked with him many years ago. He was fascinated by the way I played. He said, 'Man, where are you from?' I told him I'm from Scotland. He said, 'You must be from the Black part of Scotland,' meaning I played pretty funky!"

Johnstone used a plethora of guitars including his trusty '72 Les Paul Deluxe,

a Gibson L-5, B.B. King Lucille, a '69 Strat, and an Ernie Ball EVH. Acoustics included a Takamine, Gibson J-200, and a late-'60s Yamaha FG-140 he played on many of John's '70s classics.

Coming in the midst of John's farewell tour was the critically acclaimed 2019 biopic, *Rocketman*. Johnstone was happy the film used John's 1983 hit, "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues," which included a rare co-writing credit for him.

Johnstone is working on a documentary about the peak years of the Elton John Band's massive success through the early '80s, which included producer Gus Dudgeon shepherding John, Johnstone, Murray, Olsson, and percussionist Ray Cooper. Johnstone said progress came quickly while recording classic albums such as 1973's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.*

"We were kids doing what we loved doing," he recalled. "We were having a scream in the studio, playing great music. *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* clinched everything; it said, 'These guys are at the top of the whole thing right now.' We were getting calls from John Lennon, congratulating us. It was insane. It was our time."

Their music was amazingly taut, though Johnstone flatly dismisses the perception it was all painstakingly crafted.

"The main thing was we weren't belaboring the point. We were cutting really raw stuff, and people misunderstand that point because they think, 'Elton John's music is so perfect.' But if you listen to it, it's really basic, as far as recording. We have Gus to thank, and all the top-notch engineers who captured what we were doing early on. That's why most of the songs were first, second, or maybe third takes. We knew we wanted to capture the excitement and vibe.

"People ask me, 'How did you come up with that idea?' Usually, your first idea is your best idea – your first bit of inspiration is the right one, you know? If you try and change it – 'What about this?' or 'What about that?' – that's when you're in the studio for an extra six months messing around until you disappear up your own ass. We were blessed with a great sense of telepathy amongst the band, great music, great lyrics, and a *killer* front guy. It was just a wonderful experience."

The first time Johnstone worked with John was on 1971's *Madman Across the Water.* Earlier that year, he'd worked other projects with Dudgeon and songwriter Bernie Taupin.

"I was first hired to play on the song 'Madman Across the Water.' I turned up with an acoustic guitar, a mandolin, a sitar, and a banjo. I came up with the intro riff, and Elton said, 'Oh, I love this. This is great.' And then we did 'Holiday Inn,' and he wanted banjo on it. I said, 'I don't think banjo is going to work. I think mandolin would be way better.' I was true to my convictions, and it worked great."

Shortly after the sessions, Johnstone was invited to join John's band.

Dudgeon's role, Johnstone said, was to provide objective ears. He wasn't a musician, but that was in his favor.

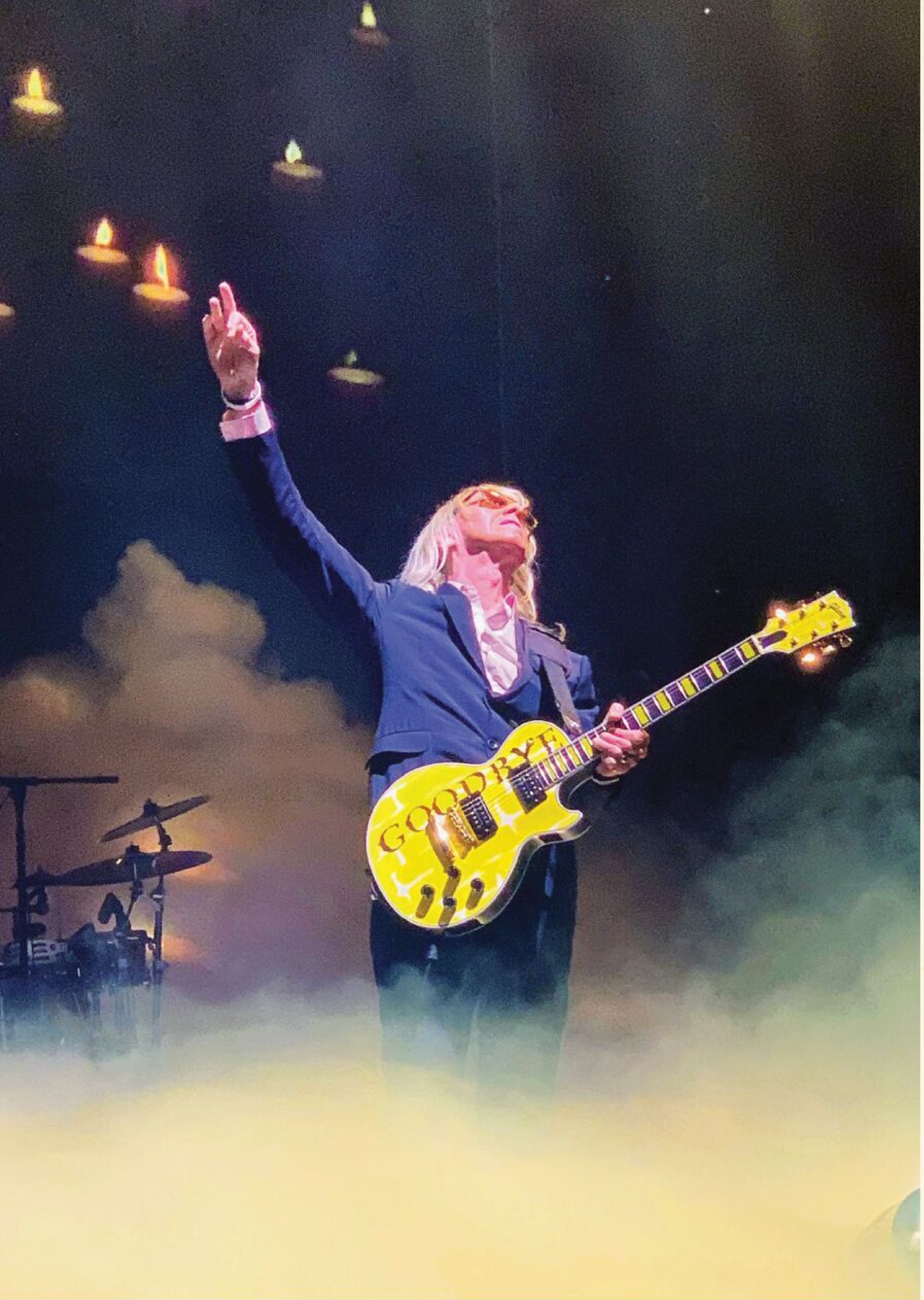
"Gus wasn't afraid to say, 'That part is a bit cheesy. How about changing that? How about this?' He had an instinctive knowledge of great sound and what was working. He loved our music. His two favorite instruments were piano and acoustic guitar, so it was like we were made in heaven! He wasn't a player, but he understood guitar sounds better than anybody I've ever met."

Except for four years in the late '70s and early '80s, Johnstone has been a constant in John's band. In '88, he became musical director. What exactly does that mean?

"It's a several-barreled job. In the old days, Elton, myself, Dee, and Nigel were a *band*, and it wasn't like anybody was in charge. Elton owned up to the fact we were doing what we were supposed to do, and nobody was telling anybody else what to play. We got very lucky. It was meant to be. We've since added horn sections and background vocalists, which means I have to find people who not only sing or play great, but aren't idiots. If you're travelling around the planet with people, you want to

Davey Johnstone:Holger Max Hoetzel, courtesy D. Johnstone.

"I get hired to play because of the way I play. It's not because they want me to play the dots on a page, it's because they want me for what I bring to the song."



Johnstone with a Custom Shop Les Paul (left) designed by Bernie Taupin with the emblazoned "Goodbye" in reference to the Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour, and in the studio with a Strat.

Johnstone 2019: Charlie Hendon.

know they're reasonably cool and reasonably together. That's half the thing."

While diehard fans often want to hear artists dig into catalog obscurities during a concert, most paying customers want to hear their favorites.

"With the catalog we have, we're very blessed. You *can't* play it all. And you want to include things people aren't too familiar with. Elton is totally aware of that. You have to do stuff the audience knows, then throw a few things in. Plus, we jam on stage every night."

Another consideration is that some songs are popular only in certain countries.

"When we play the U.K., there's a dance hit Elton did with Thom Bell in the '70s called 'Are You Ready for Love,' which nobody knows in the U.S. It was re-released in 2003 and was a top five hit. Whenever we go to the U.K., we put that back in the set. The same with 'Sacrifice,' which was a massive #1 for him in the U.K. and Europe but did nothing here. In France, 'Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word' is their favorite all-time song. In Brazil, they love 'Skyline Pigeon,' which is a deep cut not many people know."

Through the decades, Johnstone has squeezed in an equally impressive, varied body of work as an in-demand session player. His roster includes Stevie Nicks, Bob Seger, Alice Cooper, Rod Stewart, Meat Loaf, the Pointer Sisters, Olivia Newton-John, Judy Collins, and many others. He has also done movie music for James Newton Howard and Hans Zimmer.

"I've always been really grateful for the work I've been able to do. My talents tend to make other people's songs better, or I contribute in a way that brings the song together in a really robust form. That's what I've been hired for. It can be stressful when you're brought in to play with a really hot or high-level artist, but I've always been comforted by the fact I get hired to play because of the way I play. It's not because they want me to play the dots on a page, it's because they want me for what I bring to the song."

He has no plans to slow down after John's farewell tour. In addition to the documentary, in the next few years he's preparing a 50th anniversary reissue of *Smiling Face* and a new reissue of *Holes in the Heavens*, the 1991 album by his rock band, Warpipes.

"I will tell you this really *is* the farewell tour. We're not going on the road again. I'm speculating here, but there may be a one-off thing, but we're wrapping up this aspect of our career. I don't know what Elton and his manager/husband David Furnish are planning for him, but I'm sure they have some ideas for Elton's retirement. This has been a long haul, and you've got to stop somewhere.

"For my part, I'm *never* going to retire. I'm not going to tour, per se, but I might do live stuff. For sure, I'll be writing songs and music. I'll carry on playing because I love it. It's what I do. It's what I enjoy. Why should I stop?" **VG**

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Upcoming Events

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***Denotes a new or updated listing.**

Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, February 13, 202, May 8, 2022, at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8-3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www.lcmsm.com

FEBRUARY

***Guitar Players Swap Meet,** Sunday February 13 from 10am – 3pm at the Hide Away Café & Lounge 207 W Main St. Bensenville, IL 60106. For more information contact George Berger 630-417-0714

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, February 27, 2022 Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

MARCH

Cincinnati Guitar Show, Sunday, March 6 at the Sharonville Convention Center 11355 Chester Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45246 just off I-75 Sharon Rd exit. Hours 10am - 4pm. For more info contact Denny Melchers at 513-503-1072 or cincyguitarshow.com.

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, March 6 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Il 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 847-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

Carolina Guitar Show – Asheville, March 12-13, 2022 at the WNC Ag Center I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info, call Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com **(See Advertisement on page 79.)**

The Lansing Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, March 20th at the Causeway Bay Convention Center, 6820 S Cedar St., Lansing, MI 48911 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Central Coast Guitar Show, March 26, 2022, 10am-4pm, at the Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 3455 Skyway Dr., Santa Maria, CA 93455. For more info, call (805)431-3067, email centralcoastguitarshow@Charter.net, or visit www.CentralCoastGuitarShow.com.

The Indiana Guitar Show, March 19-20, 2022 at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info contact Eddie at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com **(See Advertisement on page80.)**

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show, March 26-27, Williamson County Ag Expo Park, Franklin, TN. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com. **(See Advertisement on page 78.)**

APRIL

2022 Southwestern Ohio Guitar Show, April 1 - 3 at the Clark County Fairgrounds - Youth Building, Springfield OH. Dealer day April 1 from 10am - 5pm, Saturday, 10am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. Contact Jimmy at 614-202-5638

NY Guitar Show, April 2-3 at the Freeport Recreation Center, 130 E Merrick Rd. Freeport, NY 11520. Hours 10am-5pm. Contact Rich Johnson at 516-435-8382 or rich@thefishingline.com. www.nyguitarexpo.com **(See Advertisement on page 82.)**

Northeast Guitar Expo, April 3, 2022 at The Verve Hotel & Convention Center, 1360 Worcester St., Natick, MA. Hours 11-4. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email – NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com, website – www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

The Kalamazoo Music Instrument Swap, Sunday April 24 at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center, 2900 Lake St., Kalamazoo, MI 49048 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Dallas International Guitar Festival, April 29 through May 1, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com. **(See Advertisement on page 81.)**

MAY

Eastern Kentucky Guitar Show, May 1, Boyd County Community Center, Rt 180, Catlettsburg, KY. Hours 11-4. Vendor set up at 8:00AM. For more information contact Jeff Preston 606-923-4130 or Jeff Ware 606-922-0626

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 7-8, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

Amigo Chicago Guitar Show, May 21-22, Odeum Sports & Expo Center, Villa Park, IL. For more Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Rob at (417) 869-3325 or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com

JUNE

Amigo SoCALGuitar Show, June 4-5, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more info Larry at (918)288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

The Indiana Guitar Show, September 9-11, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN. For more information contact Eddie at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 17-18, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, September 25 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove

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Eastman Handcrafted Guitars & Mandolins
Fuller's Vintage Guitar
The Guitar Sanctuary

Upcoming Events

Village, IL 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 947-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

OCTOBER

Guitarlington 2021, October 15-16 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax (817) 473-1089 www.texasguitarshows.com.

NOVEMBER

The Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, November 6th at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission or e-mail james@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.

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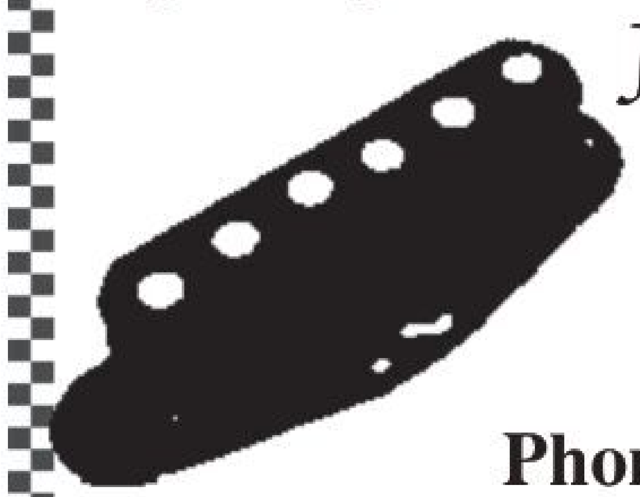

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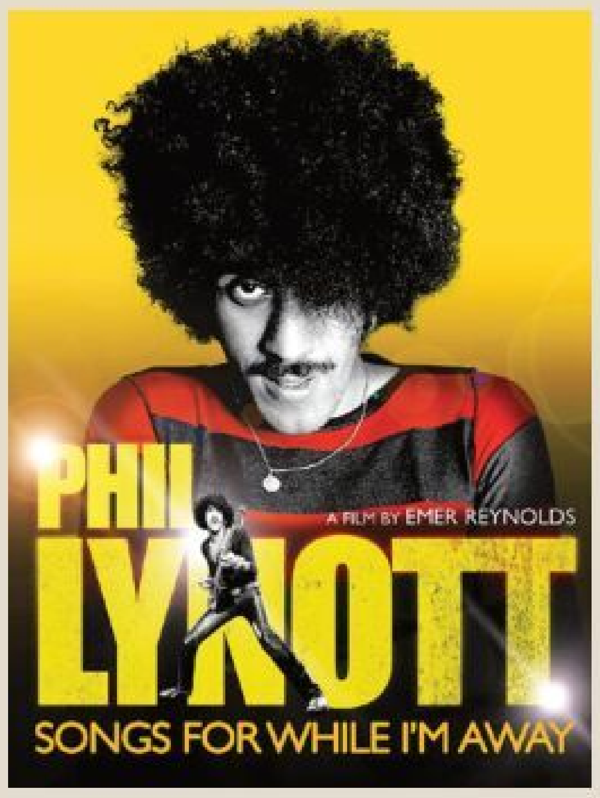
Thin Lizzy live in 1978 with Phil Lynott flanked by guitarist Scott Gorham.



PHIL LYNOTT
Songs For While I'm Away

FORCE OF NATURE

A rock-doc of Thin Lizzy's fabled frontman, this film traces the singer/bassist's life through interviews from bandmates, family, and friends. A half-black child in 1950s and '60s Dublin, Lynott grew into a tough, force-of-nature rocker – yet never lost the Irish roots in his lyrics.

Along the way, Phil ran with Les Paul rippers like Gary Moore, Scott Gorham, Brian Robertson, Snowy White, and John Sykes, plus Strat ace Eric Bell. With deadpan humor, Gorham explains the origin of Thin Lizzy's guitar harmonies, a studio gaffe that became their trademark. Nearly dropped by their label, Lizzy scored their 1976 breakthrough with "The Boys Are Back In Town," a track the band didn't care for at first. Today, Lynott protégé Huey Lewis calls it, "A bolt of lightning, one of the best rock songs of all time."

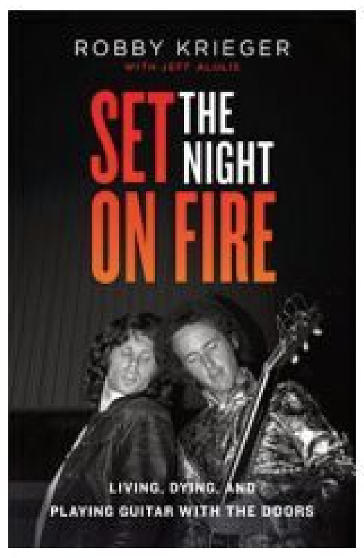
The band's glory years followed – though the guitar-blazing "Got To Give It Up" hinted at Lynott's increasing drug use, slowly devouring Lizzy from within. Interviews confirm the downward spiral and how Phil's death at 36 shocked the rock universe.

Songs For While I'm Away is a poignant film that doesn't pull any punches. As anyone will tell you, there was only one Phil Lynott, and he was irreplaceable. ***– Pete Prown***

Eric Gales
Crown

Hearing Eric "Raw Dawg" Gales sing about his turbulent past is nothing new. On *Crown*, Gales continues the narrative, but basks in the glory of his accomplishments, shoots down detractors, and revels in the love of his life. "I Want My Crown," with its tongue-in-cheek lyrics and blistering guitar duel with Joe Bonamassa, brings the bowling shirt/soul patch crowd to the party – but *Crown* goes much deeper than pentatonic fireworks, and thanks to the production team of Bonamassa and Josh Smith, it's his best-sounding record.

Real-world blues ditties like "Survivor," "Too Close To The Fire," and "The Storm" paint a vivid picture of the struggle to exist in an intolerant world. Gales is incendiary on guitar throughout, as heard in "You Don't Know The Blues," which brandishes his gospel roots, and fearlessly bears his soul on ballads. Though he gets an assist from songwriters Keb' Mo', Tom Hambridge, and James House, Gales' genius transcends with soul-saturated vocals and out-of-the-box guitarmanship; dig the Leslie-drenched solo on "Let Me Start With This." *Crown* also features fine acoustic playing on "I Found Her," instrumental vignettes, horns – and that fiery thing Gales has been doing for 30 years. ***– Oscar Jordan***



Robby Krieger with Jeff Alulis
Set the Night on Fire: Living, Dying, and Playing Guitar with the Doors

The Doors' legend exploded after vocalist Jim Morrison's 1971 death. Now, we get to hear guitarist Robby Krieger's perspective, after late keyboardist Ray Manzarek and drummer John Densmore published their autobiographies.

The mellow axe-man with the self-described "worst hair in rock and roll" aims to correct those earlier efforts with a sly, self-deprecating sense of humor when he says Manzarek's book was filled with inaccuracies and Densmore's, while "more reliable," had its own errors and "editorialized." It also examines the convoluted 2003 lawsuit filed by Densmore and Morrison's estate against Krieger and Manzarek for touring under the band's name.

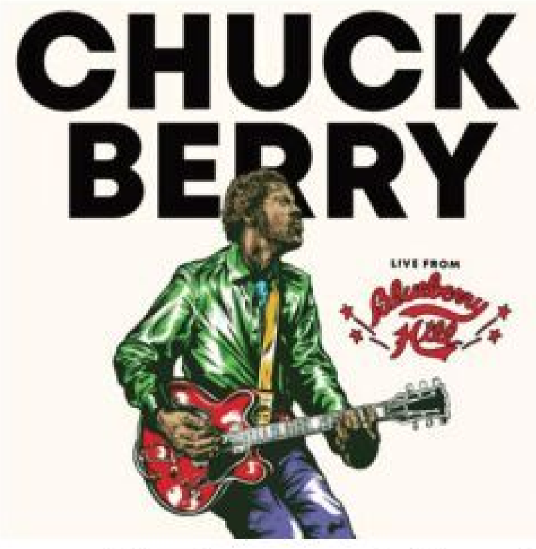
Morrison tales exist aplenty; Krieger still struggles to understand Morrison's self-destructiveness, admits guilt about ignoring family problems, and ashamedly recounts becoming a heroin addict.

Many guitar stories are included. As a fan of blues, folk, flamenco, and jug-band music, Krieger was an "acoustic purist" before his Doors audition and the required move to electric guitar. After seeing Chuck Berry, he wanted a Gibson ES-335, but bought a cheaper

Thin Lizzy: Fin Costello/Redferns.

SG Special instead, on which he wrote early Doors classics before it was stolen.

"To other people, an object itself may be valuable," he says. "To me, its value lies in what it inspired." A great quote – and profound philosophy. ***– Bret Adams***

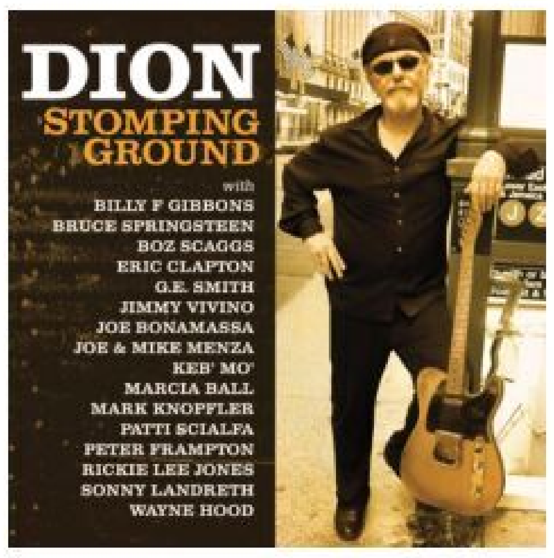


Chuck Berry
Live from Blueberry Hill

If you saw a Chuck Berry performance during the final 20 years of his life, it was likely at a club called Blueberry Hill, in his native St. Louis, where he played more than 200 consecutive monthly shows beginning in 1997. Those intimate gigs featured rock and roll's founding father running through familiar hits with his iconic ES-355, occasionally with mixed results. But not on *Live from Blueberry Hill*.

A satisfying romp culled from performances in 2005-'06, when Berry was nearing his 80th birthday, it includes iconic songs, signature guitar intros, riffs, and fills – from the opening "Roll Over Beethoven" to "Rock and Roll Music" and the obvious closer, "Johnny B. Goode." Extended solo workouts are in short supply, but two moments where Berry stretches out modestly come on a pastiche of "Carol"/"Little Queenie" and "Bio," the title track from his 1973 Chess LP.

This album's high energy level makes it easy to overlook its thin duration of under 35 minutes, and *Live at Blueberry Hill* can't be called essential. But it's a joyous snapshot of rock's greatest poet in his twilight, still delivering memorable moments from an unparalleled catalog. ***– Sean McDevitt***



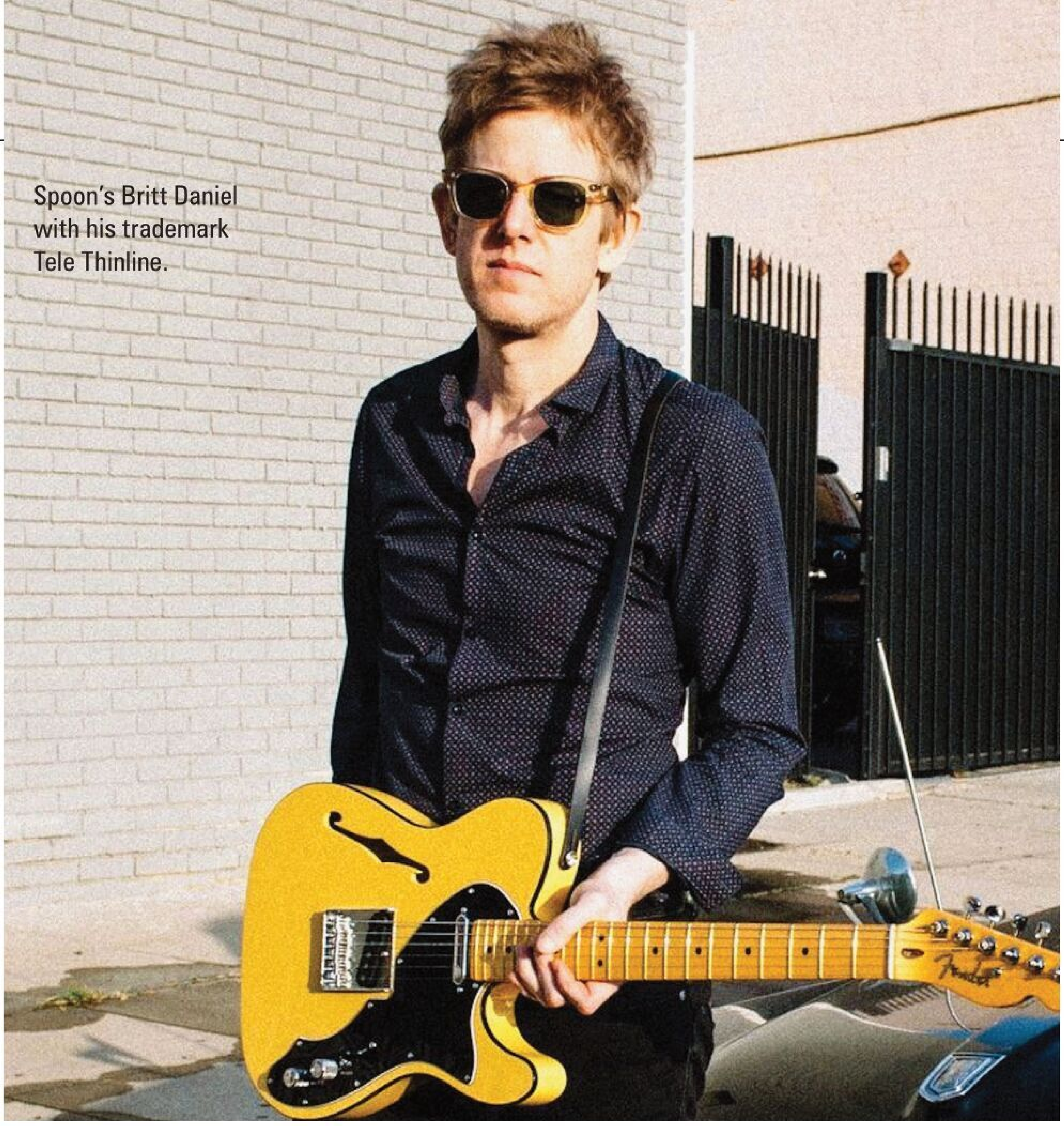
Dion
Stomping Ground

Through more than six decades, Dion DiMucci has traversed doo-wop, folk, folk-rock, gospel and, in recent years, blues-flavored guitar music – a passion rooted in his discovering Robert Johnson in the mid '60s.

Stomping Ground is a continuation of his 2020 collaborative album *Blues with Friends*. Its 15 songs are mostly bluesy originals by DiMucci and Mike Aquilina, joined by heavy-hitting guest singers and guitarists.

On "Hey Diddle Diddle," G.E. Smith's screaming riffs and solos energize Dion's vocal. Bruce Springsteen's acoustic guitar and harmonica on "Angel in the Alleyways" are fleshed-out by Patti Scialfa's harmonies. The Chuck-Berryesque "I've Got to Get to You" is a Dion duet with Boz Scaggs that features the screaming father-son Les Pauls of Joe and Mike Menza. Wayne Hood's guitar adds incandescent passion to "I've Been Watching," a duet with Rickie Lee Jones.

Keb' Mo's amplified Delta slide time-shifts Hendrix's "Red House" into late-'40s Chicago blues. DiMucci and Joe Bonamassa generate a powerful, hypnotic call-and-response throughout "Take It Back." Sonny Landreth's masterful slide textures on "Cryin' Shame" generate a similar effect. His macho vocal on "My Stomping Ground" gets an added punch from Billy Gibbons. Everything is tied together nicely by detailed notes, and Pete Townshend's heartfelt written appreciation of Dion. ***– Rich Kienzle***



Spoon's Britt Daniel with his trademark Tele Thinline.

Spoon
Lucifer On The Sofa

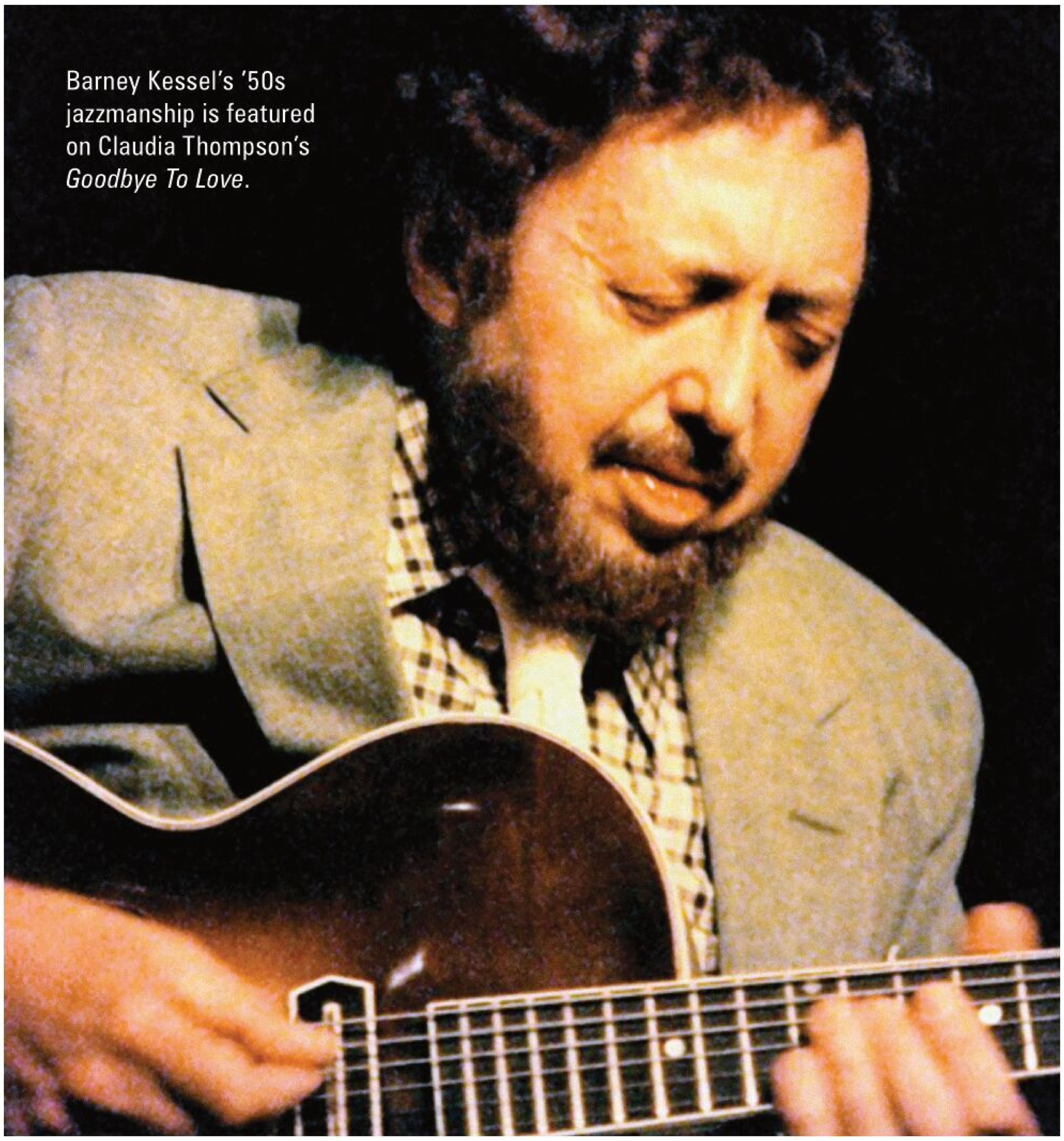
Ten studio albums in, Spoon's latest just may be its purest rock-and-roll record. What took so long? The band's early albums verged on ragged-edge post-punk, while power-pop masterpieces like 2007's *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga* made them indie darlings and heroes in their home base of Austin. Their previous disc, the futuristic *Hot Thoughts*, was more synth than guitar. Now, they're back to basics, and for a band that revels in the obscure, from impressionistic lyrics to angular rhythms and funky solos, it's big news.

Vocalist Britt Daniel has described this album as "fun" and "a record for good times," which we all need more of at present. There's even a couple love songs, which ain't typical Spoon. The first single, "The Hardest Cut," sets the scene with driving guitar and bass – and rock and roll, in general. But it's not just the sound that sparkles; Spoon has always employed tight, intricate, layered arrangements, but the band truly shines here with inspired rhythmic riffs and iconoclastic solos. The opener, "Held" proves the point, while the closing/title track edges into indie-soul heaven. ***– Michael Dregni***

Spirit
Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus

He was a teenaged guitar hero, played the *first* legato-shred solo

Britt Daniel photo courtesy Fender Musical Instruments.


Barney Kessel's '50s jazzmanship is featured on Claudia Thompson's *Goodbye To Love*.

on vinyl, and was in a band with Jimmy James – a.k.a. young Jimi Hendrix. Yet today, few remember the late Randy California or his vastly underrated band, Spirit. Let's change that.

Along with keyboardist Jay Ferguson ("Thunder Island"), bassist Mark Andes (Heart), and stepfather, Ed, on drums, Randy helped create 1970's *Sardonicus*, a post-Beatles gem. "Love Has Found a Way" displays wicked psychedelic riffs within a pop context – the players were surely listening to *Abbey Road*. Randy's hippie ballad "Nature's Way" reflects the earthy Topanga Canyon scene in Los Angeles, while "Mr. Skin" finds Spirit in the groove of Sly & the Family Stone.

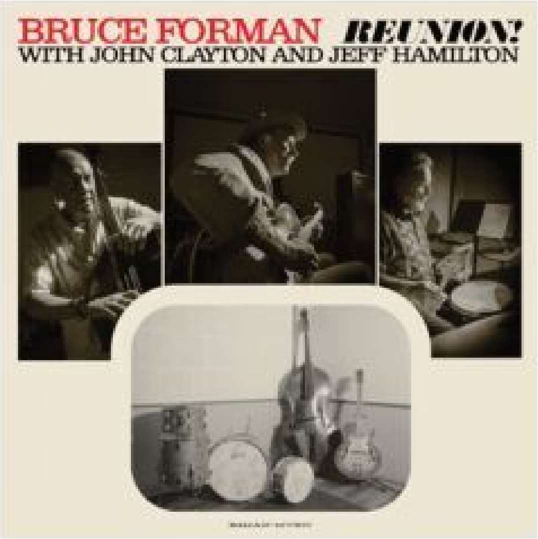
For Randy's shred moment, fire up "Street Worm." After a stereo-panned fuzz solo, the guitarist explodes with high-speed, modal legato runs, *years* before Allan Holdsworth and Joe Satriani – it's an historic moment in guitardom. For more goodies, this set includes studio bonus tracks and cuts from two '70 shows. The live cut "Fresh Garbage" reminds us just how funky this band was. We lost Randy California in '97, but his wild-ass Strat mojo will live forever. ***– PP***

Claudia Thompson
Goodbye To Love

In 1956, Julie London's "Cry Me A River" was the unlikeliest of hits, yet her breathy reading of a minor-key ballad, written by a schoolmate, reached the Top 10. With austere backing of upright bass and legendary studio guitarist Barney Kessel, it was also one of the biggest introductions of jazz guitar to the masses.

That formula was obviously on the minds of label heads when they recorded jazz singer Claudia Thompson two years later. Though the accompaniment varies to add piano, brass, and woodwinds, Kessel is present throughout a dozen ballads. He adds blues bends to "Some Of These Days" and minor arpeggios to "Body And Soul," and he sensitively feeds and follows the vocal on "Blue Prelude." The intimate, pristine fidelity puts him right in your living room.

Through research and chance, the Modern Harmonic label discovered that Thompson was actually African-American, not the white female pictured on the original album cover. Justice delayed, but justice nonetheless, and the new artwork features the unsung vocalist's image. More significant to *VG* readers is a 63-years-later obscure addition to the late Kessel's impressive resume. ***– Dan Forte***



Bruce Forman
Reunion! With John Clayton and Jeff Hamilton

Bruce Forman had a simple concept in honoring the four 1957-'60 *Poll Winners* LPs that teamed Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Shelly Manne to celebrate their wins in various jazz magazine polls. Forman, who knew and worked with Kessel, recruited two latter day masters – bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton. Forman played Kessel's 1946 Gibson ES-350 (featured in *VG* last month), which he owns. Clayton, the owner of Brown's upright bass, used it, and they borrowed a set of Manne's drums for Hamilton to use.

Forman's "Feel the Barn," and "Rope-A-Dope" evoke the wit and swing of the original albums as he ably moves from chord melody to single-note passages and back. On Kurt Weill's "This is New," he invokes the famed intro Kessel played on Julie London's '50s vocal hit "Cry Me a River." For Ray Brown's "Gravy Waltz," Forman offers a rhythmic intro before Clayton articulates the simple melody. "Hammer's Back in Town" showcases Hamilton's free-flowing brushwork.

Rather than re-create the original Poll Winners recording of "Green Dolphin Street," Bruce wittily infuses it with elements of the flamenco classic "Malagueña." The trio also offers a stately, eloquent rendering of "Stardust."

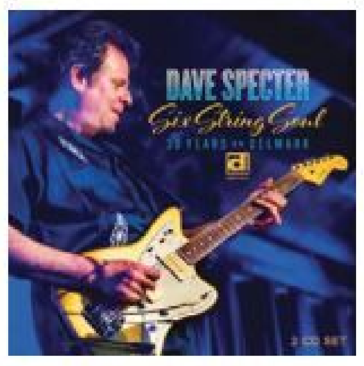
From start to end, Forman and his bandmates affirm both their virtuosity and the legacies of Kessel, Brown, and Manne. ***– RK***

Barney Kessel: Vernon Hyde/Wikimedia Commons.

extra EXTRA

KEB' MO'
Good To Be…

Co-produced by Vince Gill, Keb's latest is folksy, bluesy, classy, and brimming with the kind of sunny songcraft that wins awards. With Darius Rucker guesting on "Good Strong Woman," Keb has the innate ability to draw people in with a warm smile and a resonator. His electric blues solo on "All Dressed Up" is impeccable. ***– OJ***



DAVE SPECTER
Six String Soul: 30 Years on Delmark

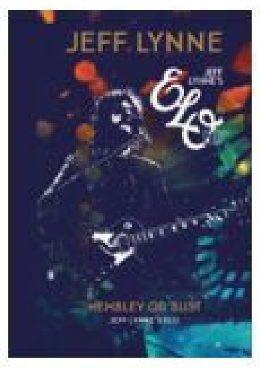
Chicagoan Dave Specter's calling card has always been versatility – and this double-disc retrospective documents the guitarist's efforts across everything from swingin' jazz to gutbucket blues. Among the highlights are soulful collaborations with vocalists like Otis Clay and Jesse Fortune, and a slew of top-shelf instrumentals like Magic Sam's "Ridin' High" (recorded live) and the appropriately titled, Specter-penned "Sanctifunkious." A satisfying overview of Specter's impressive discography. ***– SM***

LEGENDARY SHACK SHAKERS
Cockadoodledeux

Expect the unexpected from J.D. Wilkes and company. A wacky-but-heartfelt "Rawhide" sets the scene for this down-home collection, replete with rockin' fiddles, banjos, and Gary Siperko's guitar work. "U-Can-Be-A-Star" steps back to rockabilly à la Chuck Berry, while "Punk Rock Retirement Plan" is – *surprise* – sweet honky tonk that name-drops Johnny Cash, Johnny Rotten, Johnny Horton, and Johnny Ramone. ***– MD***

THE ELECTRIC PRUNES
Then Came The Dawn

Six CDs are obviously too much to devote to a one-hit '60s band, save for completists. The psychedelic quintet's main claims to fame are "I Had Too Much To Dream (Last Night)" and the pioneering religious-rock of *Mass In F Minor*. But lead guitarist Ken Williams deserves a place in the annals of fuzz and wah, if not rock guitardom. ***– DF***



JEFF LYNNE
Wembley or Bust

Marking their 2017 gig at London's popular stadium, Jeff Lynne's ELO is captured in this *swank* coffee-table book. Giant color photos reveal sweet Gibson axes and even how ELO's famous spaceship was constructed. Lynne says he penned the '76 hit "Evil Woman" in six minutes; "Handle with Care" was co-written with George Harrison – and finished in Bob Dylan's garage. A posh concert keepsake. ***– PP***

THE MERSEYBEATS
I Stand Accused – The Complete Merseybeats and Merseys Sixties Recordings

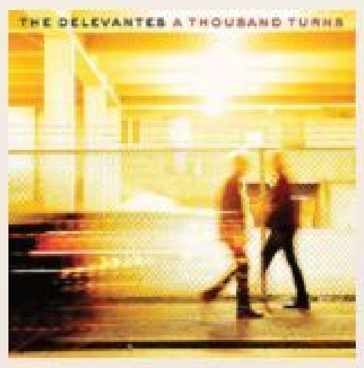
Like fellow British invaders the Searchers, these Liverpudlians were known for melodic ballads with harmony vocals, though they started out covering American R&B. Guitarists Tony Crane and Aaron Williams get off gnarly solos, with bassist Johnny Gustafson's Thunderbird matching their Firebirds. This two-CD/63-track set is excellent for longtime fans or the uninitiated. ***– DF***

JOHN 5
Sinner

Dave Mustaine growls on the heavy-duty "Que Pasa," one of many highlights on the latest work from an exceptional six-string mind. From the redneck-shred of "How High The Moon" to the death-defying arpeggios of "Euphoria," John rips like a maniac. Kiss drummer Peter Criss swings on the contemplative "Georgia On My Mind," but *Sinner* is 100 percent wicked guitar music. ***– OJ***

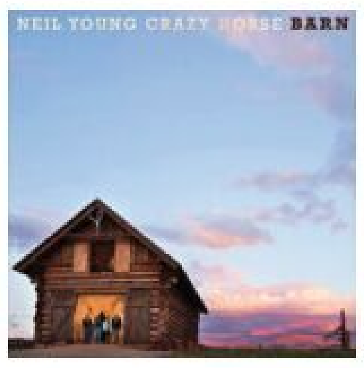
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Deep Blues

Filmmaker Robert Mugge's 1992 masterpiece – now digitally restored – has left an enduring cultural footprint, bringing once-local Mississippi guitarists like Roosevelt "Booba" Barnes, R.L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough, and Jessie Mae Hemphill out of obscurity. One of the most important films ever made about the blues (and music in general), it's made even better by the late music journalist Robert Palmer. Essential viewing. ***– SM***



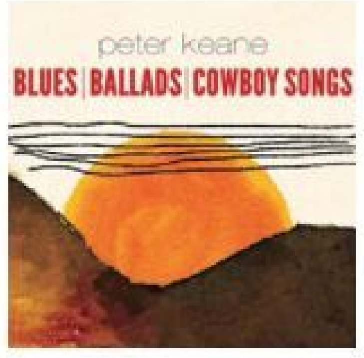
THE DELEVANTES
A Thousand Turns

Revered for their '90s country-rock-Americana albums, the Nashville band (singer/guitarist siblings Bob and Mike Delevante, E Street Band bassist Garry Tallent, and drummer Bryan Owings) offer a powerful and refreshing comeback. Mike's jangling 12-string and the brothers' harmonies are a constant on well-written, austere rockers such as "The Junk Man" and "Dear Kate." ***– RK***



NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE
Barn

The ever-prolific Young has regrouped Crazy Horse again, including multi-instrumentalist Nils Lofgren. This raw, immediate album has introspective acoustic ballads outnumbering amp-frying rockers. "Shape of You" is relaxed country-folk, while the feisty "Human Race" is the standout electric jam. "Welcome Back" is a loose epic with plenty of gurgling riffs. *Barn* will please Young devotees who don't expect heavier material to dominate. ***– BA***



PETER KEANE
Blues/Ballads/Cowboy Songs

From the opening "Weary Blues," by way of Frank Hutchison and Doc Watson, Keane's delicate fingerpicking signals an accomplished guitarist who seduces rather than dazzles. With minimal instrumentation and covers ranging from Skip James and John Hurt to Hank Williams and Merle Travis, it's a throwback to Folkways Records. Austin's Marty Muse adds sweet pedal steel to Blaze Foley's "Clay Pigeons." ***– DF***

ENUFF Z'NUFF
Hardrock Nite

Covers of Beatles, Wings, and Lennon hits, as hard-rockin' power pop? Frontman/guitarist Chip Z'Nuff says *let it be* in this balls-out tribute. "Magical Mystery Tour" has never rocked harder, while "Eleanor Rigby" becomes a ferocious anthem. Chip and co-guitarist Tory Stoffregen riff on "Live & Let Die" with crunch galore. Don't worry about authenticity; just crank the gain on this fab project. ***– PP***

A young Semie Moseley with his first hand-built tripleneck.

T. Sameli Rajala

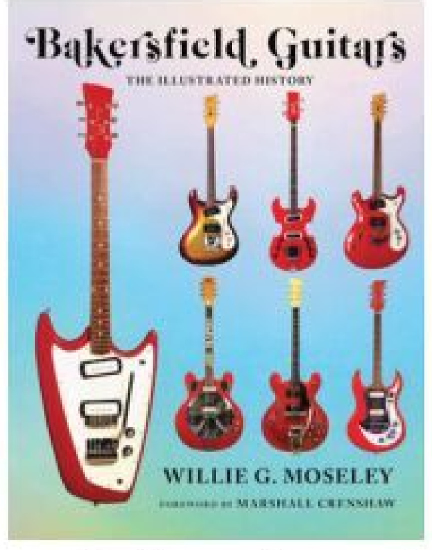
Electric Rajala

There's eclecticism and there's versatility. Having one doesn't mean you have the other, but Finland's Rajala has both – and more.

A loose job description would be blues man, with homages to T-Bone Walker, Albert Collins, and Gatemouth Brown (the original instrumentals "Blues For Sofia" and "Roaster"). Another "original" instrumental, "Distracted," is a direct cover of Freddie King's "Sidetracked"; so why re-title and claim composer credit?

"Stop Breaking Down Blues" owes more to the Rolling Stones than to Robert Johnson, and Hendrix gets a nod with "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp." "Moaning For Molasses" is a bit of organ-trio soul that's closer to the Vaughan brothers than, say, Kenny Burrell or Grant Green. "Come Into My Arms" is a hard-hitting shuffle with great reverby tone. And "The Truth Will Rock You" comes from the late, under-sung John "Juke" Logan – and it definitely rocks.

The biggest departures are "These Boots Are Made For Walking," reimagining the Nancy Sinatra hit as loping Jimmy Reed shuffle, and a solo slide take on Jean Sibelius' "Finlandia." As the title implies, Rajala elsewhere excels on acoustic, be it flat-top or resophonic. Even more versatility. ***– DF***



Willie G. Moseley

Bakersfield Guitars: The Illustrated History

No, this is not a history of Joe Maphis, Don Rich, Buck Owens, Roy Nichols, Merle Haggard, and the other pickers who created the Bakersfield Sound. Rather, it's the tale of the luthiers centered around the San Joaquin Valley city – builders who crafted some of the funkiest, most idiosyncratic – and, yes *coolest* – American guitars.

As a *VG* contributor, author Moseley doesn't need introduction, but many of the guitars here *will* – and that, too, is cool news. There are the known-but-little-documented, such as Semie Moseley's Mosrite brand and the threads to its obscure history. Then there's Joe Hall's output – Sterling, Encor, Epcor, and ultimately, the Hallmark brands – as well as Bob Shade's spinoff Gospel line. And there's Bill Gruggett's eponymous guitars, plus three – count 'em! – different Standel makers, Acoustic, Mosrite-Dobro, GM Custom, Osborne, and last but hardly least, Walt Smith's far-out Mel-O-Bar (featured in *VG* last month).

The author includes hundreds of historical pictures, catalogs, studio shots of rarities, and basses, too! If you're a fan of the weird, wonderful world of vintage American guitars, this book fills yet another niche – and does it with style worthy of such funky instruments. ***– MD***

The Band

Cahoots 50th Anniversary

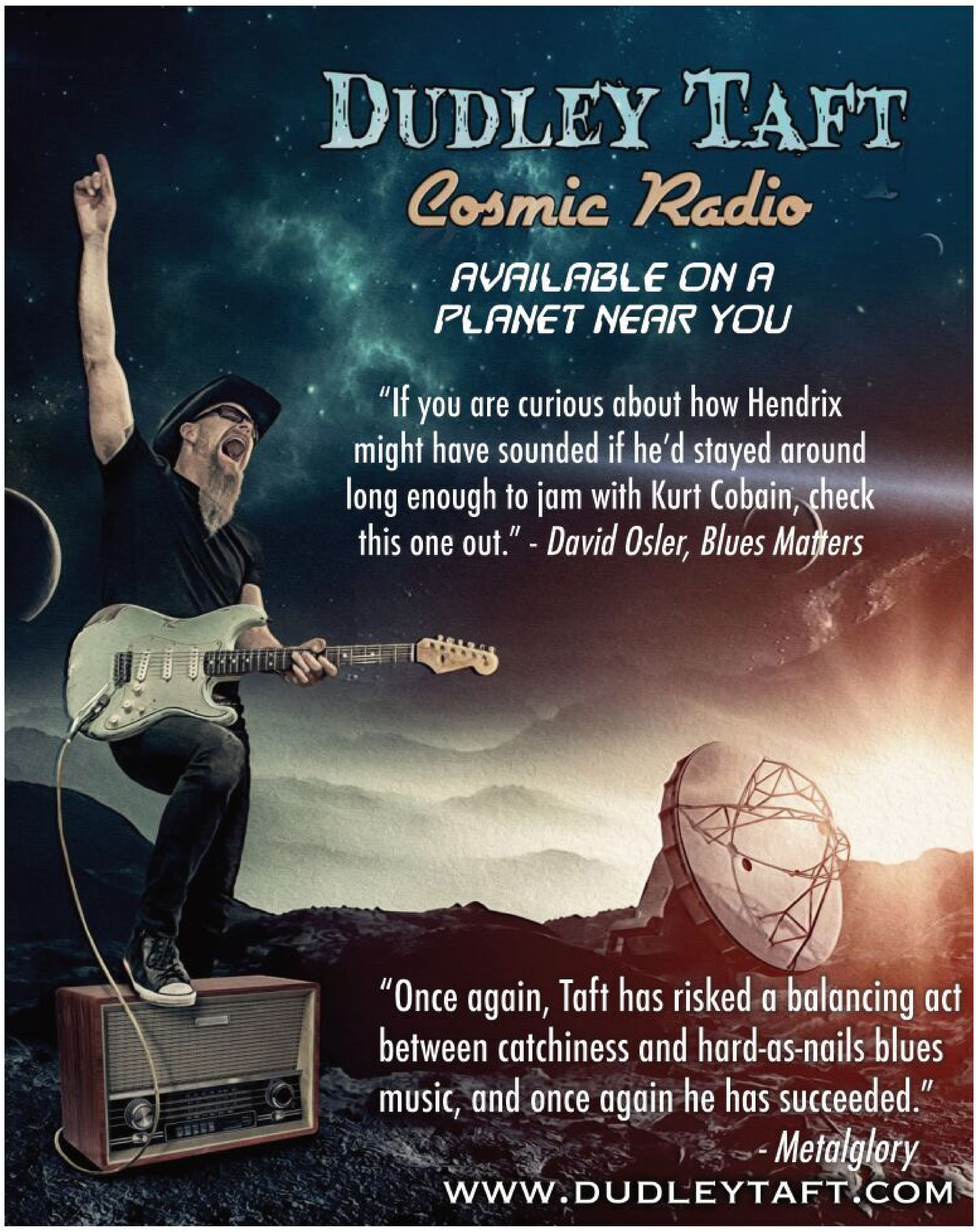
Released in 1971, *Cahoots* wasn't a major hit, but it reaffirmed The Band's songwriting prowess and gifted vocalists, Levon Helm, Rick Danko, and Richard Manuel. Fifty years later, guitarist Robbie Robertson asked legendary engineer Bob Clearmountain to remix the album from scratch, yielding improved sonics while retaining the vibe.

Robertson, one of the *earliest* blues-rock guitarists (as Ronnie Hawkins' early-'60s sideman), found his niche as The Band's main writer and Fender ace. Crank up "Life Is a Carnival" to hear his funky Leslie-cab licks over Danko's fat bass and Garth Hudson's organ. Robbie's Tele twang can be heard on "4% Pantomime," a life-affirming jam with guest Van Morrison.

Bonus material includes studio outtakes and most of a 1971 Paris gig. Onstage, you'll find concert gems like "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," "Rag Mama Rag," and "The Unfaithful Servant," the last with Robertson's quick tremolo picking. "Don't Do It" is full of jabbing blues bends and R&B comping.

For the Blu-Ray disc of *Cahoots*, Clearmountain uses a high-resolution Dolby ATMOS mix for even deeper audio thrills. In fact, every version of this reissue reminds us of The Band's joyful sound – and seismic impact on Woodstock-era rock. ***– PP*** **VG**

Semie Moseley photo courtesy of the Andy Moseley Estate.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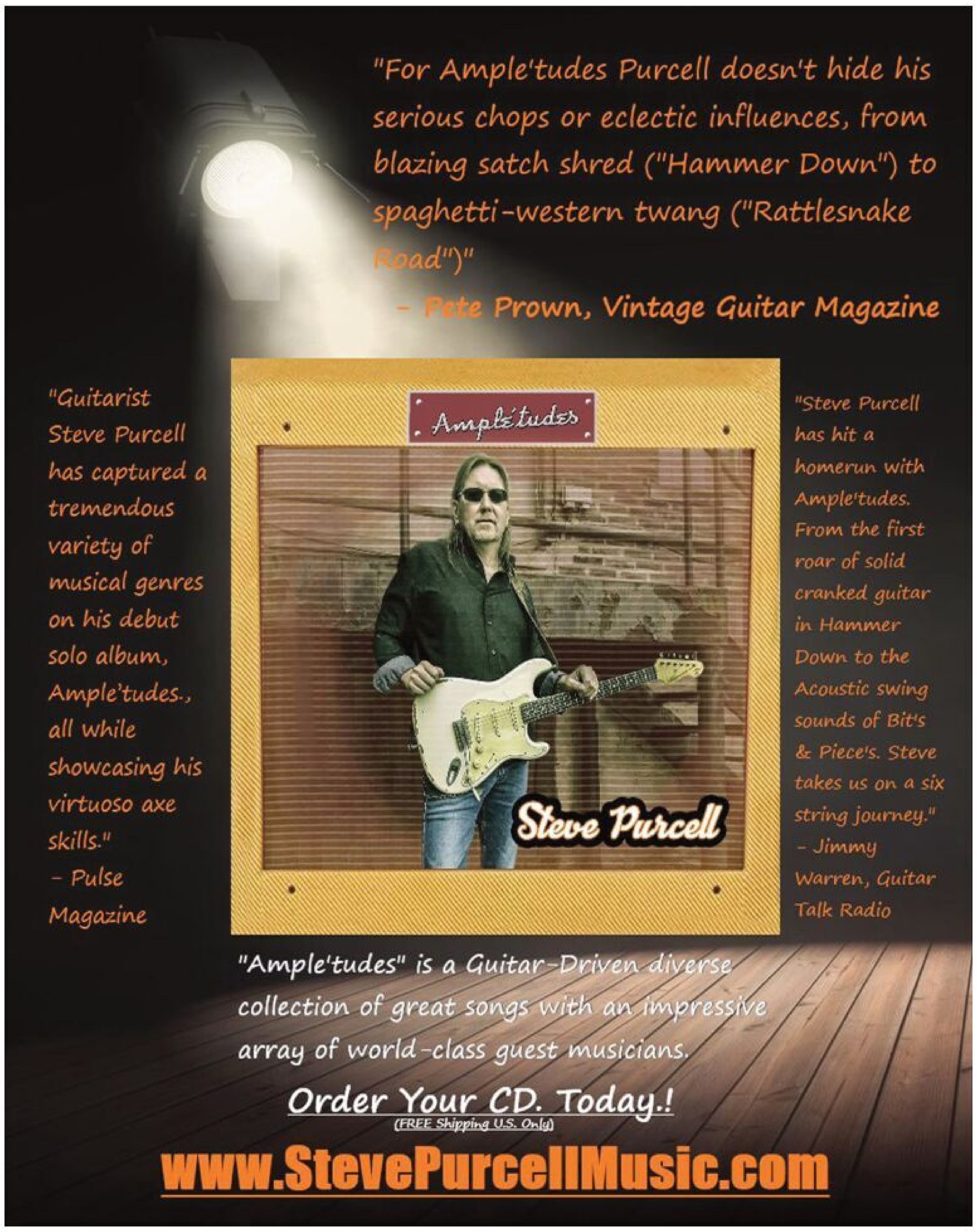
"For Ample'tudes Purcell doesn't hide his serious chops or eclectic influences, from blazing satch shred ("Hammer Down") to spaghetti-western twang ("Rattlesnake Road")"
– Pete Prown, Vintage Guitar Magazine
"Guitarist Steve Purcell has captured a tremendous variety of musical genres on his debut solo album, Ample'tudes., all while showcasing his virtuoso axe skills." – Pulse Magazine
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Steve Purcell
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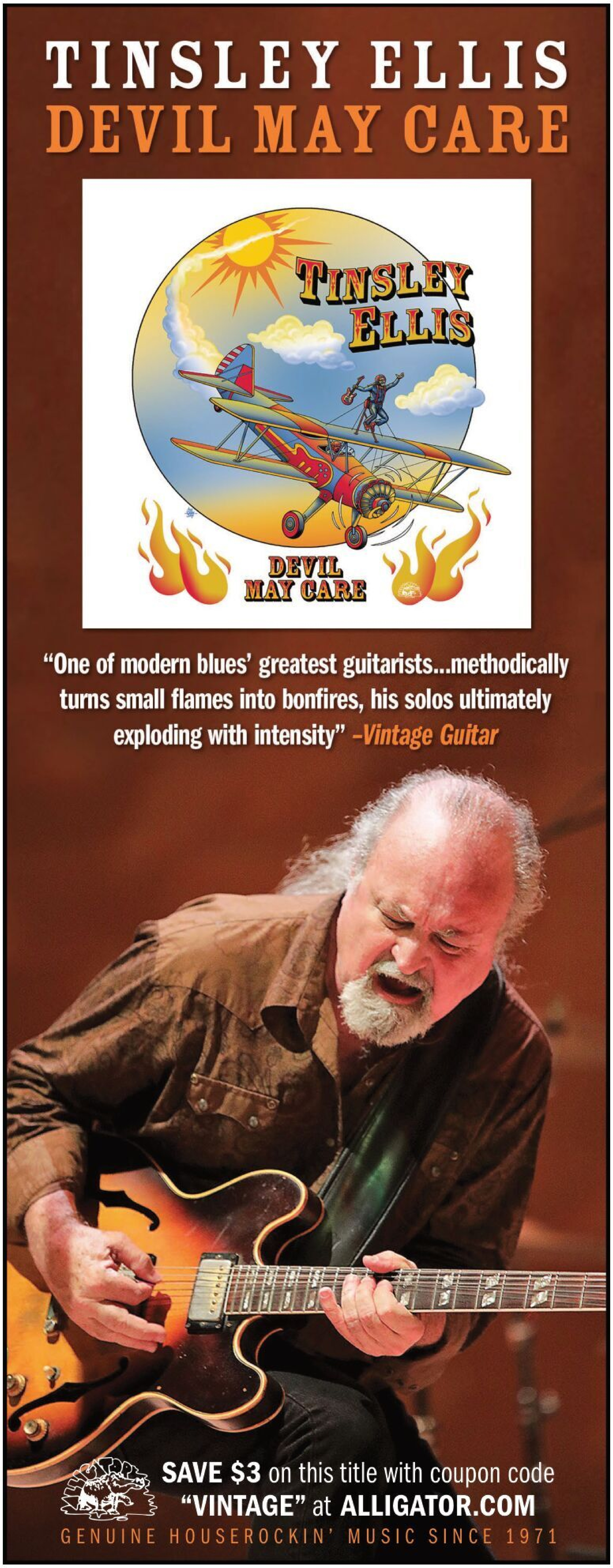
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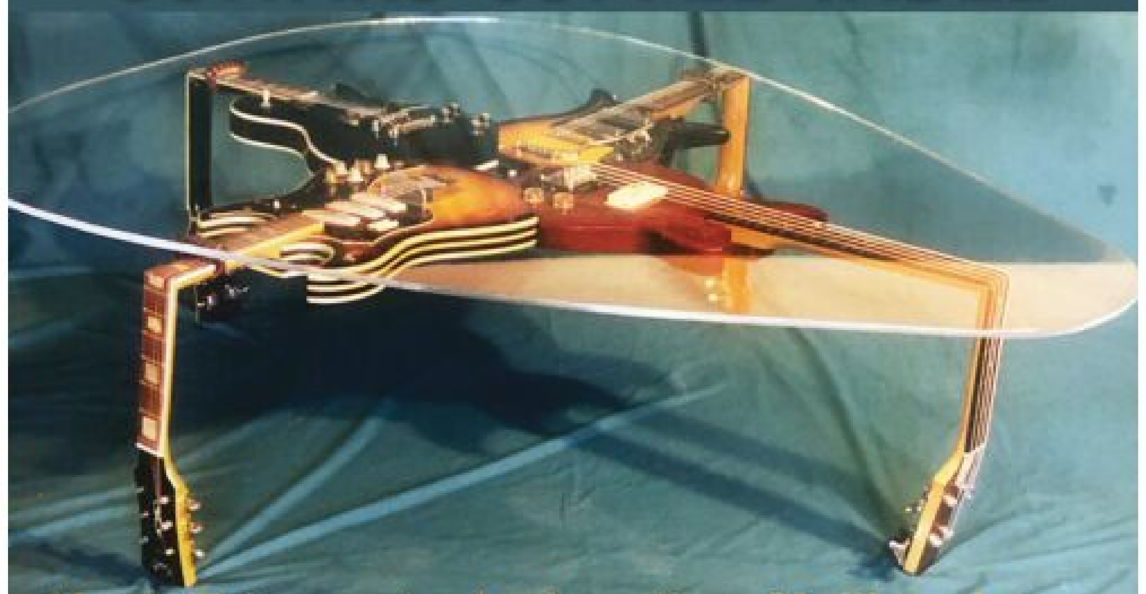

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Information wanted on Grinnell Brothe's Music Houses, who's headquarters were based in Detroit, Michigan on 1515 Woodward Ave. from 1908 to 1981. Specifically needed is info. on Francis Allen Grinnell, the grandson of the founders and his connections to Gibson Inc. of Kalamazoo, MI. during the 1920s and 1930s. Any help will be greatly appreciated, Thanks. billysoutar@frontier.com

Supro Gold Foil Pickup Set, neck and bridge, Wanted! Full humbucker size, as on Supro Westbury circa 2017. Pickups alone, or with wiring harness / controls are both acceptable. allenhears@gmail.com

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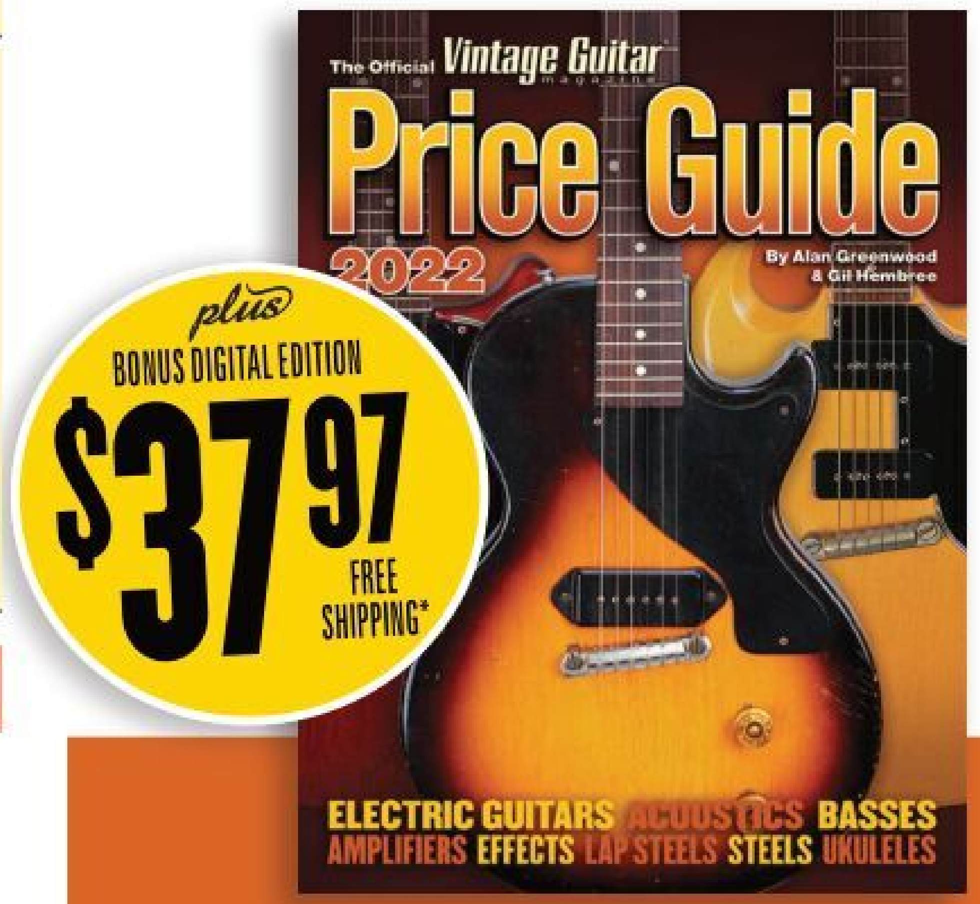

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Price: $999
www.harmony.com

The H650 1x12 combo is a 50-watt two-stage amp sporting two 6L6 power tubes, four 12AX7 preamp tubes, and a Jensen 12" Stealth Tornado speaker. A Master Volume allows you to crank the volume by pushing the Gain – or lower the Gain and crank the Master Volume. To deal with the teeth-rattling volume, Harmony includes a built-in attenuator to maintain power-tube harmonics and superb tone without going deaf. It can be set for 50 watts or 1 watt, with in-between settings of 0.1 and 0 for silent recording using the line-out input. The controls feature Master, Presence, Treble, Mid, Bass, and Reverb. Speed and Depth knobs govern the tremolo, and the Gain knob can be pulled for volume boost. The Effects Loop, Reverb, Boost, and Tremolo functions can be controlled by included footswitches.

The H650 blooms as a base tone for all types of pedals, but has an appealing character aptly suited for the plug-in-and-go user. It's slick and upscale, with glassy highs, rich mids, and lows with humanity. The Tremolo is deep and percussive, Boost offers a super-usable grind that shines with single-coils, but cooks with humbuckers. It's a dream for the ambient effects enthusiast and will sparkle at the local blues jam.

From its leather carrying handle to '60s mid-century styling, Harmony has dressed the H650 with a lot of great features from the past while keeping an eye on the future. – ***Oscar Jordan***

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CAPTAIN CRUNCH

Boss' MT-2 3A Metal Zone

Over the years, the Boss Metal Zone has often been lampooned for its ferocious personality. But if you plug one in, you'll be hard-pressed to understand why – it's a badass box with high-gain distortion and an EQ section of *terrifying* power. This new version also celebrates the box's 30th anniversary.

The majority of this Boss' controls are EQ-related. In addition to the obligatory Level and Distortion controls, you get four concentric tone-shaping knobs to save space. Bass and Treble preside over massive EQ sweeps. Using the Bass control, the low-end on a 1x12 cab was dramatically boosted to half-stack territory – there's serious "thump" in this box. The Treble is also potent, requiring a judicious hand. If you're not careful, you'll get angry bees. The solution is simply not to overdo it.

The two middle controls are Mid and a Mid Freq that is a semi-parametric EQ. Using them, the MT-2 3A is particularly adept at that cocked-wah sound, steeped in gain and a deadly mid bump. While many stompboxes purport to deliver "stack" tones, this one does, bringing to mind blast-furnace textures of an Orange or Bogner head through a big cabinet.

While the Metal Zone doesn't have to be the only distortion unit on your pedalboard, it's a specialty gain pedal that will grab attention. It's also hellaciously fun. – ***Pete Prown***

"T" FOR TEXAS

The Ellis Guitars TX3

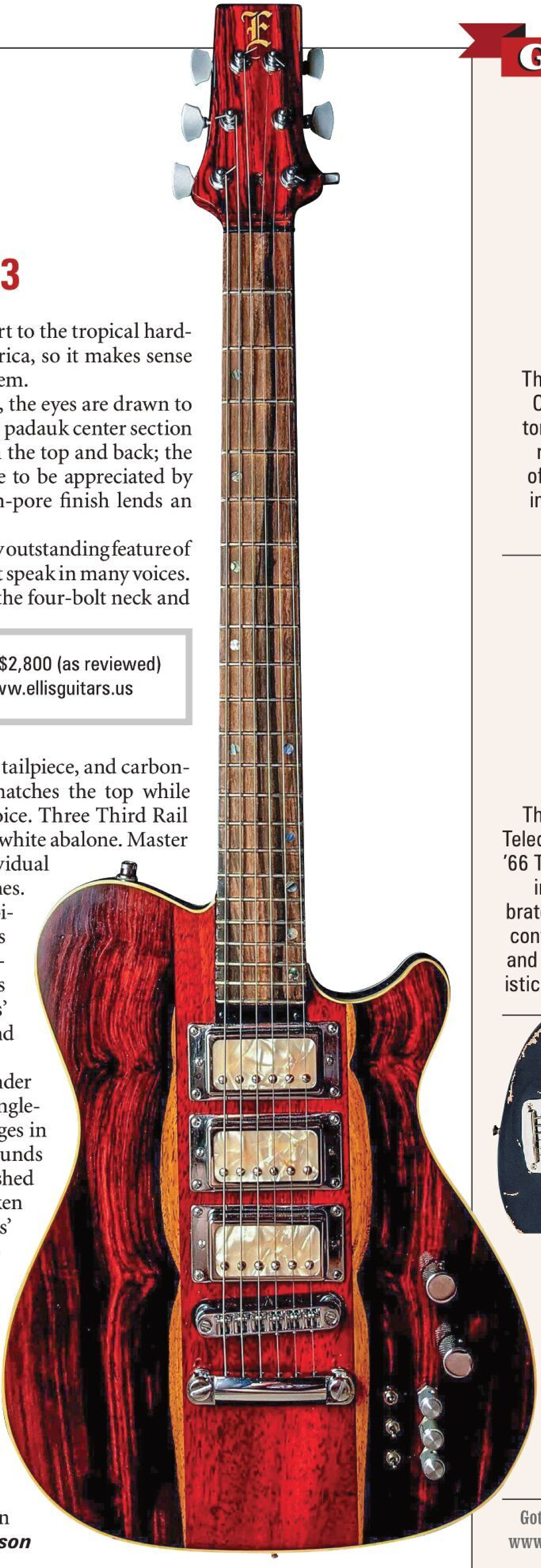
Houston is the closest major U.S. port to the tropical hardwoods of South and Central America, so it makes sense that Ellis Guitars makes good use of them.

Grabbing the Houston builder's TX3, the eyes are drawn to the rich colors of the cocobolo top, with padauk center section over a basswood body single-bound on the top and back; the TX's downsized Tele-like lines are sure to be appreciated by players' backs and shoulders. An open-pore finish lends an organic, natural feel.

But, good-looking lumber isn't the only outstanding feature of the TX3 – a patented wiring design lets it speak in many voices.

Profiled with a shouldered D shape, the four-bolt neck and headstock shape show early Leo influence, appointed with thoroughly modern details like Sperzel locking tuners, a responsibly sourced 12"-radius ebony fretboard, Kaish roller bridge with stop tailpiece, and carbon-fiber-reinforced cocobolo neck that matches the top while lending to the guitar's tight acoustic voice. Three Third Rail humbuckers are topped with attractive white abalone. Master Tone and Volume hold sway over individual Volume and three-position mini switches. While doing the math on pickup combinations would require a calculator, it's simpler than it seems, with fat, hum-canceling tone in the middle positions and single-coil tones from the pickups' north and south magnets on either end of the mini switches.

Price: $2,800 (as reviewed)
www.ellisguitars.us



Through a tube amp based on a Fender Deluxe, selecting two- or three-pickup single-coil combinations brought subtle changes in tone, providing transparent, glassy sounds that worked well with pedals and flourished behind spiky rhythms and poppin' chicken pickin' licks. Dialing in the Third Rails' double magnets expanded tone into smooth overdrive and hard crunch. Selecting all three humbuckers (think "Les Paul Custom") offered expansive sonic range with minute adjustments to the Volume controls.

The TX3 delivers a library of sounds with pedals and a favorite amplifier – a recipe for hours of fun in the home studio. If you're a gigging pro, it's simple to locate a half-dozen desirable tones, allowing you to focus on its purpose – creating music. – ***Chip Wilson***

GEARIN' UP

GREAT EASTERN SMALL SPEAKER OD

The Great Eastern FX Small Speaker Overdrive uses a discrete transistor circuit to replicate the frequency response and dynamic overdrive of a small Class A combo. Controls include Gain and Level knobs, plus High boost/cut and Low boost.

FENDER TERRY KATH TELECASTER

The Fender Custom Shop Terry Kath Telecaster is based on the late guitarist's '66 Tele, with personalized modifications including a synchronized Strat vibrato, humbucking neck pickup, reverse control plate, custom tuning machines, and three string trees. It's adorned with istickers/regalia synonymous with Kath.

VINTAGE ICON DISTRESSED V65V

The Vintage Icon Distressed V65V has an alder body, bolt-on maple neck with soft-C profile, 22-fret rosewood fretboard, Wilkinson Soapbar pickups, WJ55 tuners, floating offset vibrato, Graphtech NuBone nut, and distressed Black or Sunburst finish.

Got something new and cool? Let us know at www.VintageGuitar.com/Gearin-Up-Submission

VG APPROVED GEAR

DREAM MACHINE

Taylor's AD17e

Taylor's AD (American Dream) line aims to put affordable U.S.-made acoustics in the hands of most any player. The new AD17e employs what Taylor dubs "woods with character," meaning cosmetic appearance is secondary to sonic properties.

The 17e's essential specs include a slope-shouldered body with solid spruce top, African ovangkol back and sides, and mahogany neck (25.5" scale), with a 20-fret eucalyptus fretboard. While visually striking, look closely and you'll see an open-pore grain pattern and mellower satin finish. Taylor offers plenty of guitars with fancy finishes and inlays, but this isn't one of them.

Price: $1,599 with pickup, $1,399 without
www.taylorguitars.com

The Grand Pacific design also incorporates Taylor's V-Class bracing in a way that produces a warmer tone, *vs.* that classic "bright" Taylor tone. For live performance, it offers Expression System 2 (ES2) electronics with controls for Treble, Bass, and Volume, and three piezo sensors behind the bridge (rather than under it), which Taylor feels is superior to achieve a natural acoustic tone. To deal with any feedback issues, there's a Phase switch on the preamp, accessed by reaching into the sound hole.

The American Dream plays exceptionally well, with a fast, easy-to-play neck and setup. Tonally, look for a warm, midrange-nuanced tone, and if you turn the Treble and Bass controls past middle, you get a midrange *cut*, which can be useful in live and recording situations.

In all, the AD17e truly feels and sounds like a far pricier acoustic, thanks to its pleasing tone, neck carve, and that rich African ovangkol wood. If you've always wanted a dreamy Taylor without the wallet dent, take a look at this one. At the end of the day, pretty much every pro player will tell you a good guitar is more about tone than looks. ***– Pete Prown***

Price: $129
www.robertkeeley.com

THE TIGHTEN-UP

Keeley Electronics' Compressor Mini

One entry in Keeley's next-gen pedals, the Compressor Mini is an automatic "Manhattan-style" compression. The tiny tool's secret is an Automatic Tone Recovery Circuit that ensures signal maintains clear high frequencies during the heaviest compression. The purported result is a wider range of tonal possibilities and a transparent signal that won't mask the subtleties of your artistic expression.

The Compressor Mini clocks in at half the size of a standard stompbox. Its Volume control affects output level, while Comp shapes sustain and compression of input signal. Its transient-release-time feature adapts to humbuckers and single-coils, giving both a range of enhanced sounds.

Tucked into a pedalboard in front of a Fender Deluxe Reverb, the Compressor Mini was not only an excellent clean boost, but a valuable sculpting tool that created varieties of countrified squish or super-funky choked sounds. It would be an excellent choice for a funk enthusiast, but also improves clarity and definition with just the right amount of throatiness. It'll also smooth-out a woolly overdrive pedal, making it sing and adding enviable sustain.

The Compressor Mini is an excellent tool for adding that layer of polish to tighten up an already stellar signal. ***– Oscar Jordan***

BEST IN TONE

The Marshall DSL40CR

In the minds of guitarists, the Marshall name verges on mythic – from Bluesbreakers to plexis, they hold a special place. However, while iconic in terms of tone, they're also famous for being loud, and sometimes temperamental.

Today, guitar-amp technology is about arrays of streamlined circuits that fit into small, gig-friendly enclosures. And while Marshall is well aware of its glorious history, they also understand the needs of modern guitarists, and their DSL line is designed to meet them.

Price: $899.99
www.marshall.com

The DSL40CR is a 40-watt 1x12 combo with all-tube circuitry. Its multi-channel design includes power attenuation, digital reverb, and footswitchable features. At its heart are two EL34 tubes, four ECC83 (12AX7) tubes in the preamp, and a 12" Celestion V-Type speaker. Its Classic Gain and Ultra Gain channels are both dialed with Gain and Volume controls and an EQ section that includes Treble, Middle, Bass, Presence, Resonance, and a Tone Shift button (scooped mids!). For Reverb, there are controls labeled Classic and Ultra. Master Volume knobs are assigned for each channel. It has a switchable effects loop, dual speaker outputs, and an included footswitch. Classic Gain and the Ultra Gain channels each have a boost button, and either can be dialed-in for anything from funk to face-melting saturation.

Nothing sounds better than a single-channel amp that does one job really well, and the DSL40CR gets close. What it lacks in depth and richness from the clean channel it makes up for in approximating Jimi's glassy "Little Wing" live tone or Zakk Wylde's brutal high-gain soloing. The Ultra channel is intense; single-coils and humbuckers both soar with lustrous JCM800 chunkiness and sustain, and having two Master Volumes is a great idea so users can manage separate volume levels within a song. The only thing that keeps the DSL40CR from fully offering the honest, earthy tone of a vintage Marshall is its too-subtle reverb.

Overall, however, the amp shines. From sinewy lead tones to ballsy cleans with reverb, it captures that unmistakable British flavor in a modern package. It can roar like a beast onstage, while Power Switch cuts output in half for home use. The DSL40CR has a wealth of Marshall tones perfect for rehearsal or stage use – and the price is right. ***– Oscar Jordan***

GEARIN' UP

TECH 21 GEDDY LEE MP40

Tech 21's Geddy Lee MP40 SansAmp is an all-analog DI/preamp with Boost switch that provides 12dB of presence boost, a Shape Shifter button, Mix control, Tight button, Drive control, active three-band EQ, and Master Volume.

PRS SE SILVER SKY

The PRS SE Silver Sky has a poplar body, 635JM "S" pickups, bolt-on maple neck with 635JM carve, rosewood fretboard with bird inlays, 25.5" scale, and 8.5" radius. It's available in Dragon Fruit, Ever Green, Moon White, and Stone Blue.

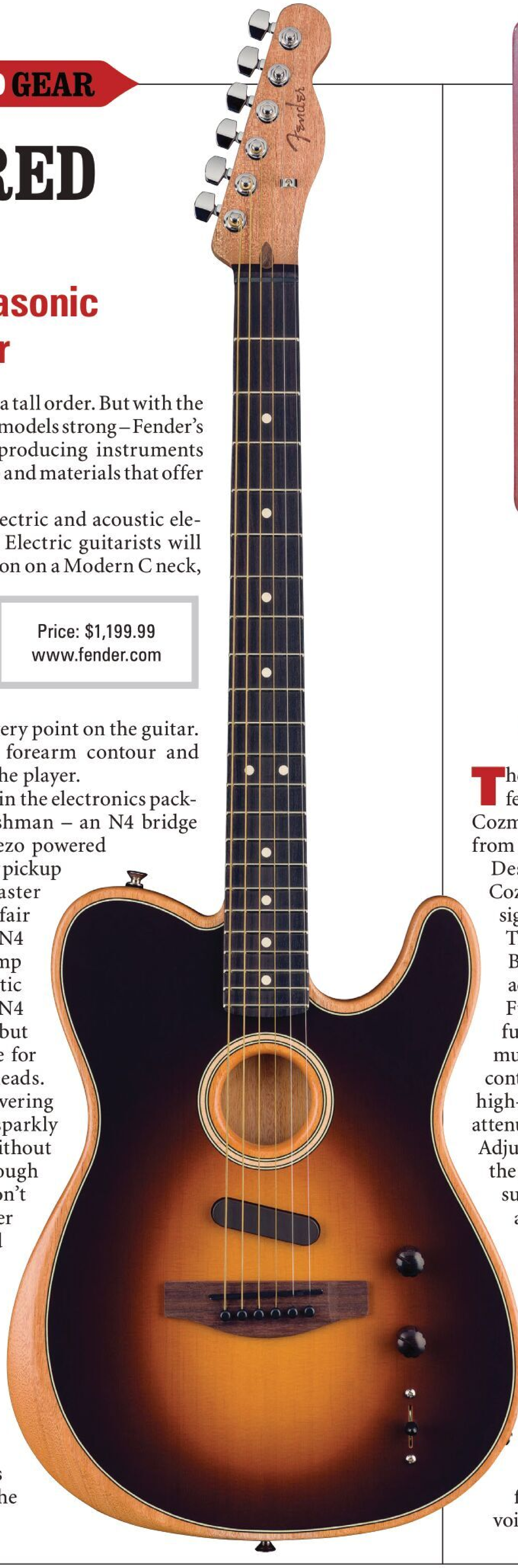
WALRUS AUDIO SLÖTVÅ REVERB

Walrus Audio's Slötvå Reverb has three customizable presets and three reverb modes – Dark (lower octave), Rise (ambient swell), and Dream (latching pad). Secondary functions on its Bypass and Sustain switches change between wave shapes for modulation on the reverb trail.

VG APPROVED GEAR

WELL-BRED HYBRID

Fender's Acoustasonic Player Telecaster



The truth? Hybrid guitars are a tall order. But with the Acoustasonic line – now five models strong – Fender's new factory dedicated to it is producing instruments boasting excellent workmanship and materials that offer streamlined functionality.

Fender was clever in fusing electric and acoustic elements for the Player Telecaster. Electric guitarists will find creature comforts – low action on a Modern C neck, 22 reachable frets, and 25.5" Tele scale. Acoustic features are led by a solid Sitka-spruce top set into a lightweight body. The natural resonance between the body and bolt-on mahogany neck is apparent at every point on the guitar. Thoughtful ergonomics like a forearm contour and rounded heel edge conform to the player.

Price: $1,199.99
www.fender.com

The Acoustasonic's magic lies in the electronics package designed by Fender and Fishman – an N4 bridge pickup and an under-saddle piezo powered by 9-volt battery with a three-way pickup selector, Blend knob, and Master Volume. To give each pickup a fair shake, use a switcher to run the N4 through a traditional guitar amp and the piezo through an acoustic amp or direct to a PA. The N4 won't give you true Tele bite, but it's a convincing solidbody tone for crunchy rhythms or low-key leads. The APT shines brightest in delivering a legit acoustic tone – full and sparkly through an amplified system without feedback or piezo quack. And though the unplugged tone is nasal, don't underrate the value of a smaller acoustic you can play unplugged at low volume.

For onstage convenience, demos, or transitioning from electric to acoustic for the first time, challenge your assumptions and see what the APT delivers. It's supremely comfortable, and the amplified acoustic tones rival or beat those available from instruments selling for two and three times the price. ***– Rich Maloof***

Price: $225
www.mcgregorpedals.com

SWEET & GNARLY

The McGregor Cozmic Fuzzball

The culmination of a quest to build the perfect transparent overdrive, Garth Heslop's Cozmic Fuzzball is the third pedal in the series from his company, McGregor Pedals.

Designed and hand-soldered by Heslop, Cozmic Fuzzball has evolved with a hairier signal than his earlier pedals, the Crunch Transparent Overdrive and Crunch Plus. By stacking hard and soft clipping then adding an overdriven transistor, the Cozmic Fuzzball brings together distortion and fuzz sounds to produce gnarly tones with musical sheen. Attack, Tone, and Volume controls offer flexibility along with a variable high-pass filter and Level control; Volume attenuates clipped signal after the tone filter. Adjusting Tone and Attack together showcases the pedal's response with squish and a lot of sustain. It tracks well for fast scalar passages, and is great for players hip to picking dynamics. Designed for guitar and bass, the Cozmic Fuzzball straddles overdrive, distortion, and fuzz textures but never appropriates one over the other. With no battery compartment, it requires a 9-volt adapter.

The Cozmic Fuzzball doesn't do metal, can't nail Hendrix fuzz tones, and won't take you to SRV land. What it *does* is something unique – it's a hybrid with plenty of character, perfect for players looking to craft their own voice. ***– Oscar Jordan*** VG

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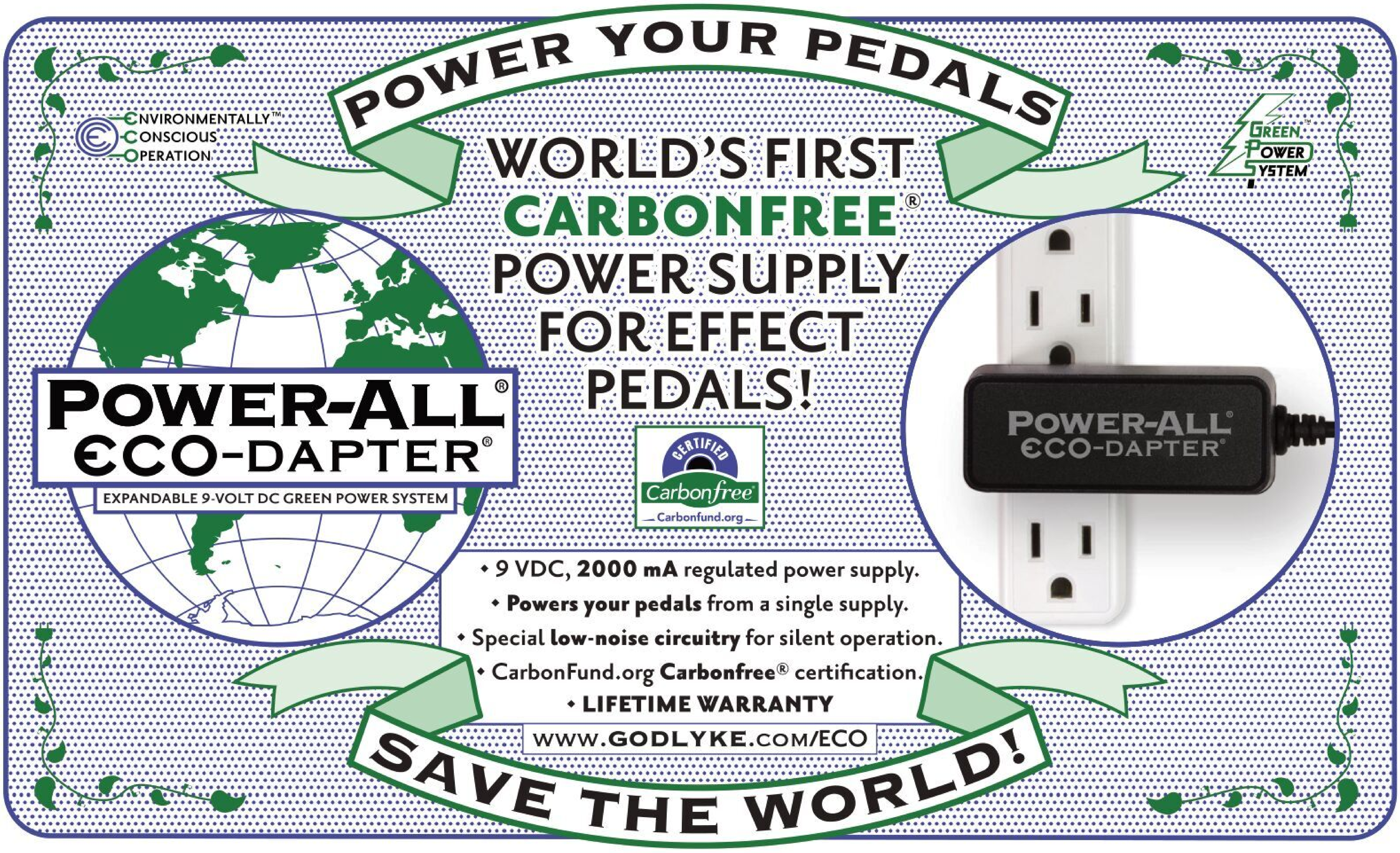

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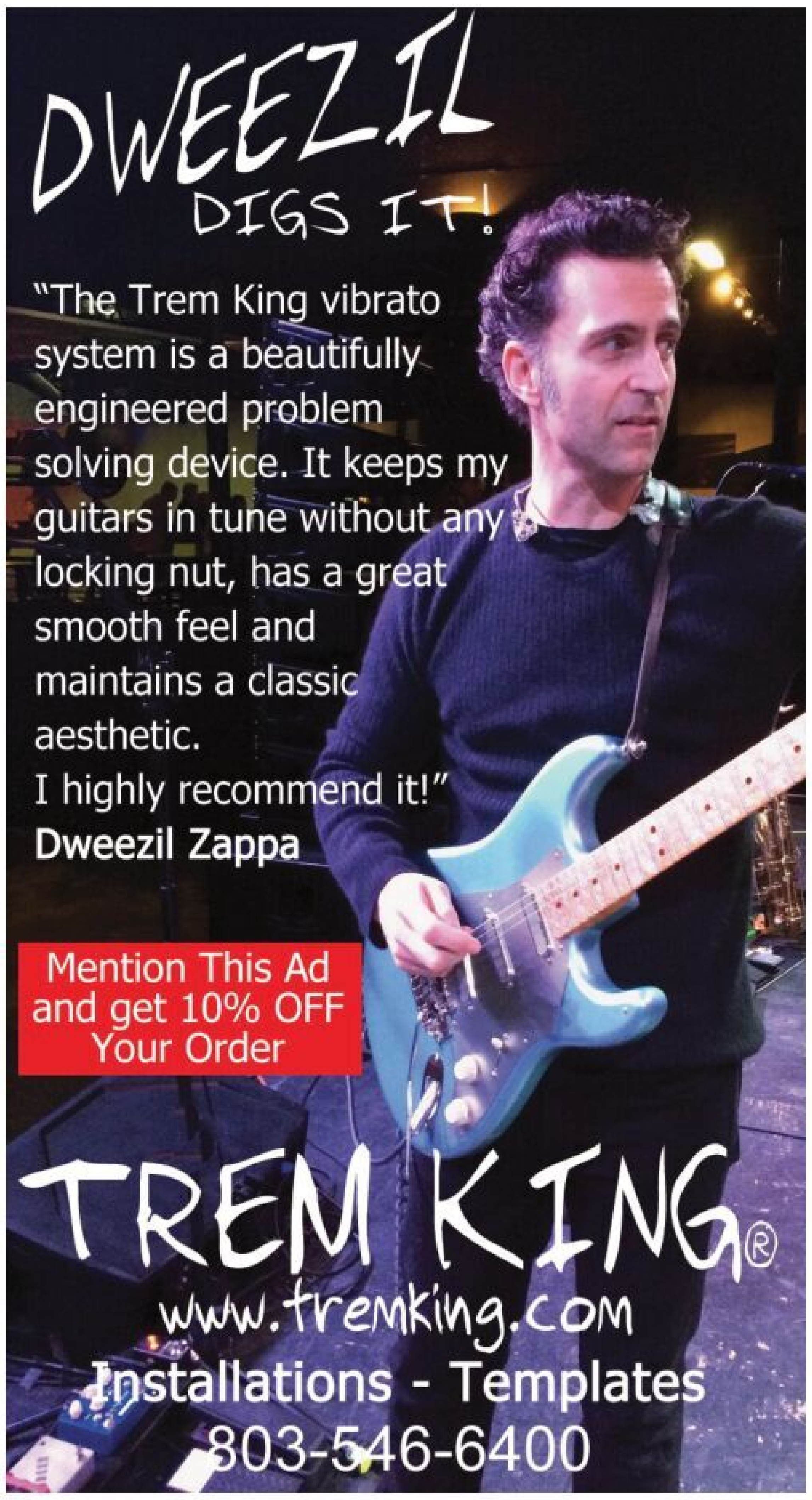

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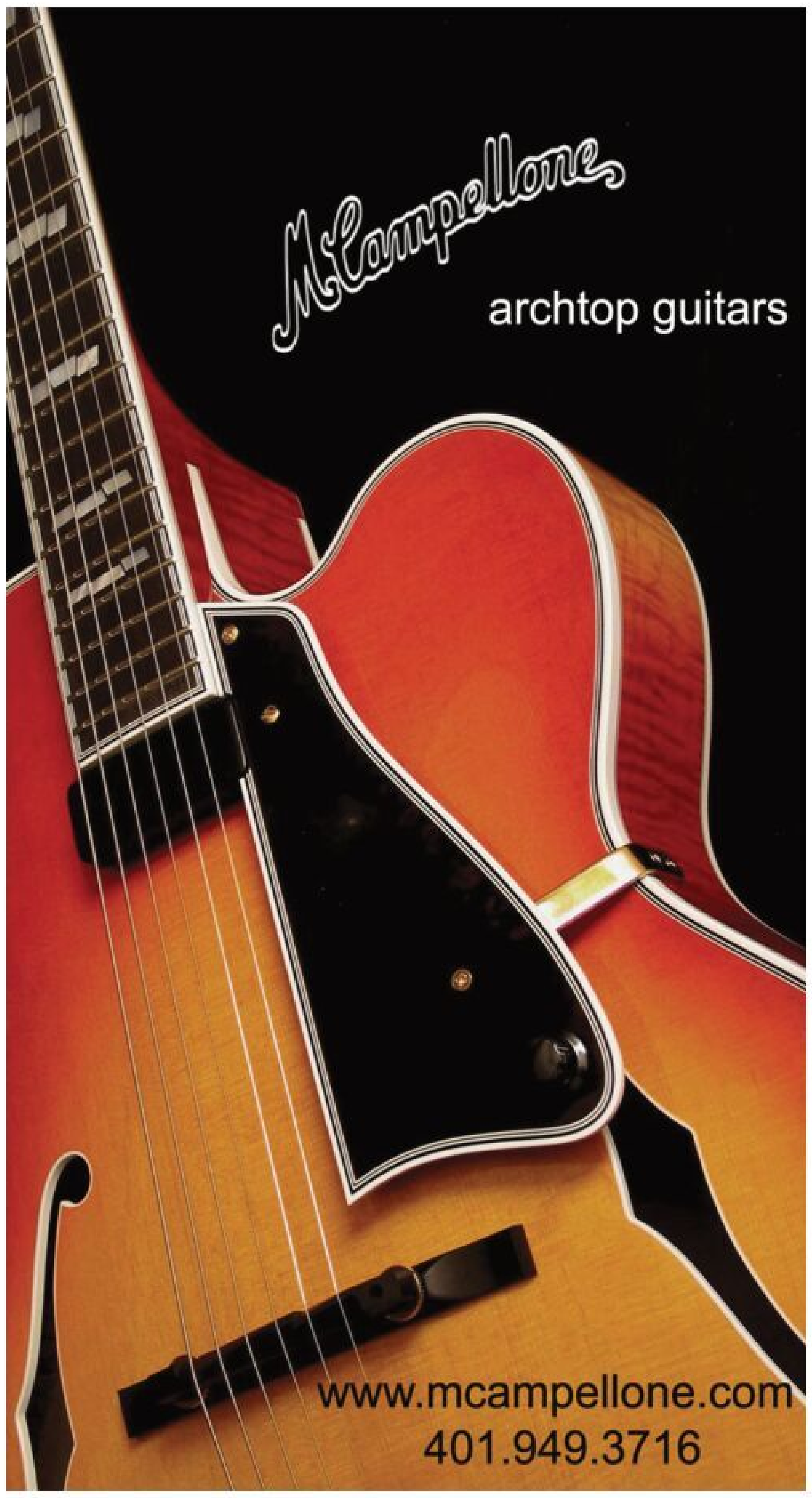

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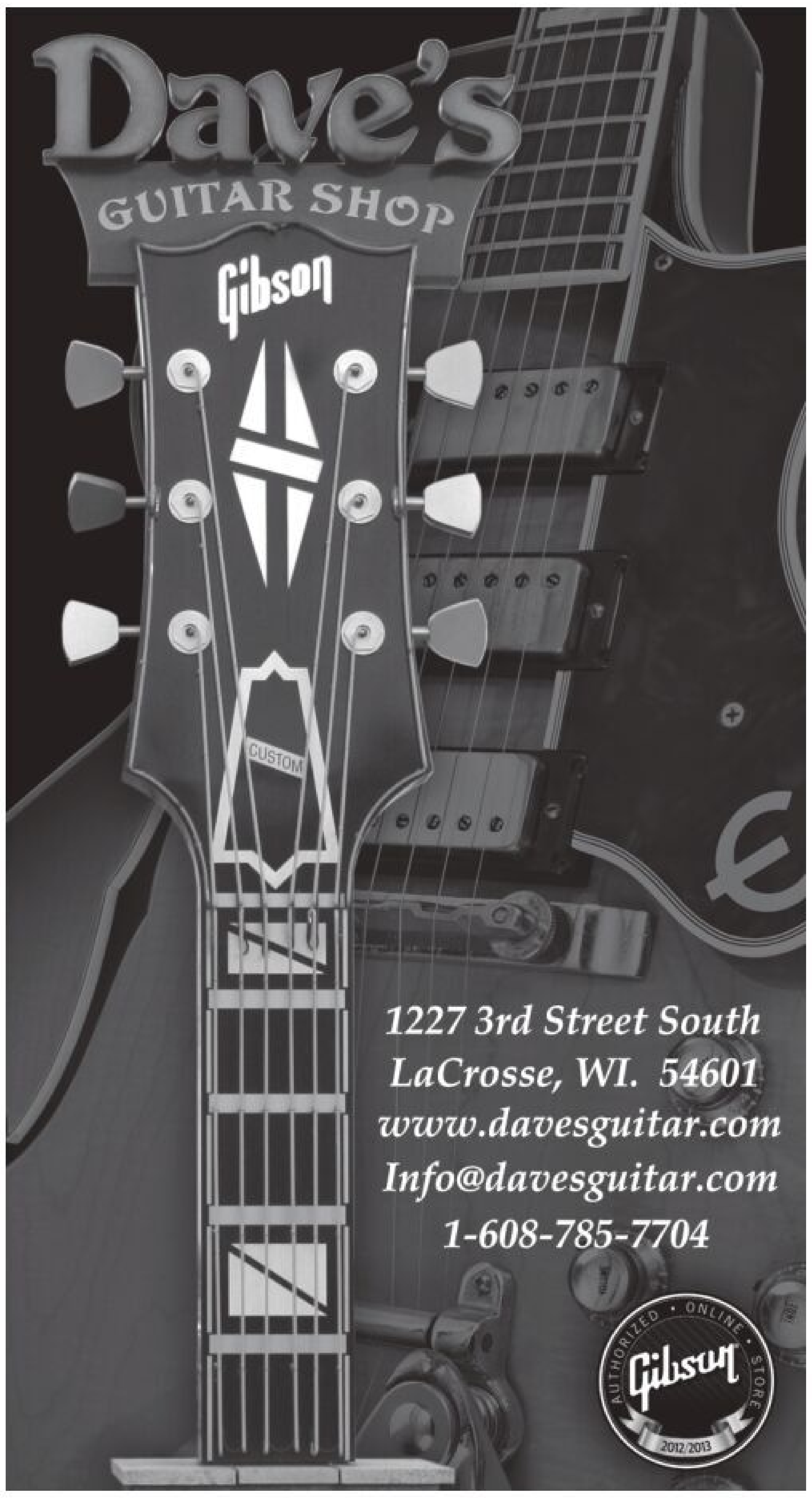
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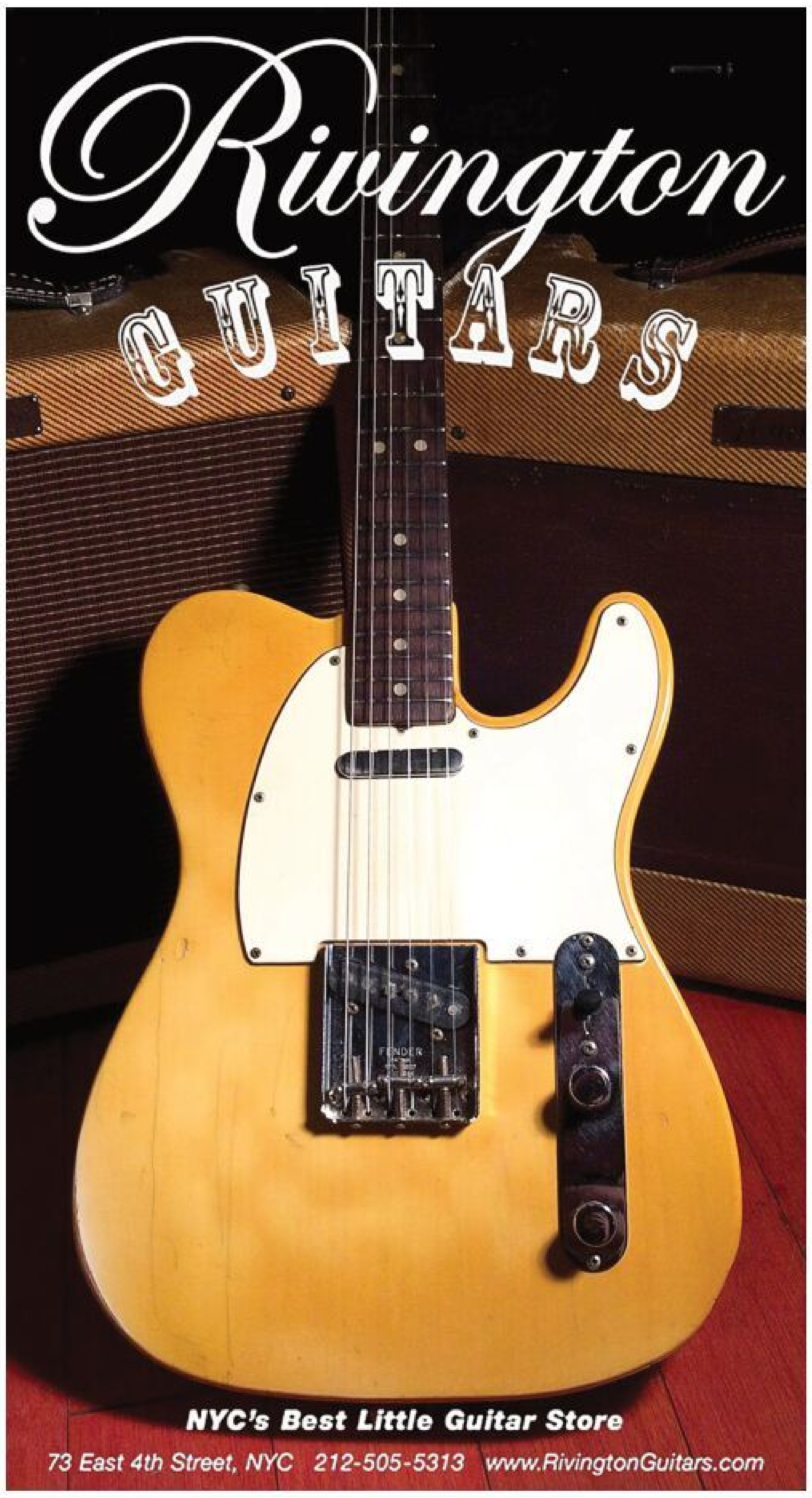
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1) Keith Crawford's collection blends natural-finish elegance with tuck-and-roll funkiness. Here are his three Warrior basses (a Soldier and two Signatures) and Warrior Gen X posed in front of an array of Kustom and Krossroad amps.
2) Larry Rosen dresses his guitars in personality. He refinished the green one himself then had artist Kate Cook add the barn owl carrying a White Falcon. It has a Gemini goldfoil pickup and a Zhangbucker Paul Bunyan at the bridge. Kate gave the Strat its Rat Fink artwork, then Larry installed a TV Jones Classic Plus soapbar and a modified DiMarzio Eric Johnson humbucker.
3) Kris Nocula snagged each of Fender's 75th Anniversary Commemorative models – a Strat, Jazz Bass, Precision Bass, and Tele, all in Bourbon Burst.
4) Longtime subscriber Morey Sullivan worked as Hank Thompson's bandleader for many years. His toolbox includes this '92 Fender Prodigy bass, all-original '66 Jazz Bass, and '86 Precision Lyte. Behind them is a '64 Bassman, and the flat-tops are a '67 Gower and '44 Martin D-18.
5) Inspired by The Kills guitarist Jamie Hince, Michael Campbell added Franz Pix 513 pickups to his Höfner 176 Deluxes from 1970 (left) and '74.

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NOT NEW!

SansAmp GT2 (1993)

Affectionately referred to as the "desert island" pedal, the SansAmp GT2 is unchanged (except for the DC input very early on). Consistently in production since introduced, it enables you to "architecturally" create your own rig in seconds.

SansAmp Classic (1989)

B. Andrew Barta's unique invention was the catalyst for the whole "going direct" movement over 30 years ago. Since then, SansAmp has evolved into an extensive line of pedals and racks, as well as being the heart of our Fly Rig® Series. Of the pedal formats, the SansAmp Classic is the most sophisticated.

EXCITEMENT NEVER GETS OLD

SansAmp Bass Driver DI (1994)

Often unseen, it's hardly a secret that the SansAmp Bass Driver is the secret weapon behind mammoth rigs on arena stages around the globe. It is also widely recognized as a studio staple for virtually every genre, and will make any FOH engineer smile.

DOES SOMETHING HAVE TO BE "NEW" TO BE EXCITING?

In a world of planned obsolescence and constant upgrades, it's rare an electronic music-related product can survive a lengthy lifespan. Yet these 3, in particular, have done just that. (We have more, such as the MIDI Mouse since 1995, but let's stay focused on SansAmp.)

For over 30 years, SansAmps have been used for every kind of music style from hardcore metal to commercial jingles and with all kinds of instruments, not just guitar and bass. Engineered for both recording and live applications, all SansAmps are 100% analog, multi-dimensional, user-friendly devices that deliver he warm, rich, organic tones of the most desirable mic'd up tube amplifiers on the planet. Is it any wonder SansAmp is regarded as the standard of the industry? Now go check out which one is right for you.

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BEST OF THE CLASSICS

Electro-Harmonix 7025EH

This new low noise, low microphonic 12AX7/ECC83 is rapidly becoming the most respected tube of this type in all markets, both guitar amps and high end hi-fi amps. Users will immediately notice the difference replacing 12AX7/ECC83 with the 7025EH, especially in the first stage.

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Genalex Gold Lion KT88

After extensive research and engineering, the famed Genalex Gold Lion KT88 is available once again. Recreated down to the finest detail, featuring gold plated grid wire, carbonized screen grids, and a tri-alloy clad plate structure for exceptional performance and sound quality.

ALSO AVAILABLE:

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12AX7/ECC83/CV4004
6V6GT • 6922
KT66 • KT77 • N709/EL84
PX2A3 • PX300B
U77/GZ34

Tung-Sol KT170

The Tung-Sol KT170 is a beam powered tetrode; a pair can generate power output levels in excess of 300 watts. Its glass envelope is gorgeous. The KT170 is the ultimate evolution from the already widely used and respected KT120 and KT150 Tung-Sol tubes.

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